



음란파괴왕 현대판타지 장편소설

# EVOLUTION THEORY OF A HUNTER

BOOK 01

*Taro*

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Evolution Theory of the Hunter

(헌터계급론)

by

**Taro**

(음란파괴왕)

# Synopsis

---

In a world of dungeons and monsters – you can become strong if you merely have enough money.

Rare skillbooks that can magically upgrade your skills in an instant are sold at exorbitant prices. So only the privileged and rich are able to buy their way to become hunters – a much revered occupation that allows one to enter dungeons and hunt monsters.

Our MC is a porter, a sort of caddie for hunters. He dreams of one day becoming a hunter when he comes into possession of a skillbook.

But the skill is a level 0. Something unheard of. No one wants it. People laugh at it. But he learns the skill – only to find that it may be the most amazing one yet.

# Copyright © 2016 by Lisa Hayes

---

First Edition: October 2016

All rights reserved.

English Translation by LightNovelCafe @ [MY:TL](#)

ePub conversion by Lisa Hayes @ [Hasseno Blog](#)

This is a free eBook. You are free to give it away (in unmodified form) to whomever you wish.

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

# Prologue

---

What is more important than effort? Items. Duh. Have you ever played games before? If I buy a super crazy deluxe protect me forever armor and fight against you, I'd probably have an advantage right? Right. In this damn world, you can buy abilities if you fork up the right amount of dough. Everyone and everything has a price. Even if I practiced for a million years, a loser like me would have a hard time passing even level 1. But you know what, those spoiled and rich snot-nosed brats somehow end up at level 10 from the very beginning every time.

So what did I do, you ask? You serious, bro? I fought like crazy at level 0. And so I became the master of that level 0.

Damn. I can feel tears coming out. Kind of like being the master at picking your nose. Who needs that.

And so it begins.

# Volume 1

# Chapter 1

---

The world is an unfair place.

In the very beginning there was a collective understanding of joint ownership and joint distribution. I guess you could think of it as communism in a way, right? Everyone hunted together to support their community and they all shared the spoils. They probably never really ran into too many issues. Probably because the community acted as one family and they never really had anything like an inheritance or passing things on to just their blood.

But then they got smart. They started farming and keeping livestock, and soon food was everywhere right? Now we have a problem. This was when the concept of ownership began to emerge. You get where I'm going with this? Now the stronger ones began to monopolize things like tools, farmland, horses, cows... everything. And the rest..well..yeah.

One day, these guys in power asked themselves. Hey. Why is it that I can survive without having to work all day while those weaklings do? And that was when they realized it. Because they were just a different class. And that was how they turned into the upper class. The elite. The noblemen. Because they were just born with better blood.

After experiencing lots of ups and downs, modern civilization came to a new conclusion. All men are born equal.



Honest to God there was a time when people really believed this.

From there, capitalist societies drew a line and said this line...this line is the divisor between success and loserdom. They now needed a new special word for those special people who crossed the line of success. This was how the mythical word “effort” was born.

It was genius. People were now slaves to the word and convinced themselves anything was possible with just the right amount of effort.

Now if you were poor, it was all your fault. It was because you just didn't put in enough effort. You loser.

‘I'm different from them. I put in all this effort and came all the way here, while those lazy people sat on their asses and ended up there.’

An era arose where people easily pointed their fingers and called others who worked over 18 hours a day lazy bums.

But then that too passed fairly quickly. Shortly a new revelation came to everyone. They realized that success was built on a foundation of failure and society could not exist without its underdog.

And so the 21st century came to pass and the 22nd century arrived.



What do you think it's like now? You think things improved even more?

Unfortunately, the world never really truly changes.

That's why I'm stuck here in this situation.

"You. Clean all of this up and come out."

"Yes. Sir."

I picked up all the odds and ends haphazardly dumped into the dungeon and put it into a bag. The party of 5 had left the area while killing a bunch of monsters, and I was over here picking up all the items they dropped.

These "Sirs" (ha!) dressed in their fancy shmancy armor with their expensive swords never waste their time in picking up these odds and ends – saying it would interfere with their hunt. It doesn't happen often, really, but once in a while they'll drop something valuable. But if that happens, someone in the party will make sure to pick it up.

They're basically looking at me as if I'm a thief.

"Kkeung!"

I put on the backpack weighing over 200 kg and stood up. If I

didn't do my daily training of squats, I probably would have thrown out my back before even getting halfway up.

Let me give you some advice. Squats are a good stamina exercise.

“Damn this weasel is slow as hell. What are we going to do with a porter this slow!”

“Yes sir. I'm coming~”

I nudged the heavy backpack into a more comfortable position and shuffled on a bit faster.

“Thank you sir.”

I bowed deeply. Very deeply. The party head who was probably about 5 years younger than me handed me an envelope with a look on his face that said he didn't want to give me any of it. There were about 100 dollars in there. This was half the usual pay. I was barely able to hold my composure.

“If you keep doing a crappy job like you did today, I'll never call on you again.”

“I'm sorry sir.”

I bowed my head again. This jerk was the youngest son of a famous construction company owner. He's only a hunter for fun

but, using his father's money for some expensive equipment and some skillbooks, he was able to become a level 3 hunter.

If you were a level 3 hunter, you were still in the top 5 percent. If I were to guess how much it cost him to get there, I'd say it was probably about 2 million dollars. To think that he used that kind of money to get to a level 2 dungeon. It seems like such an inefficient way to invest such an amount, but it really isn't. Honestly, to be able to kill monsters way bigger than yourself. A person who has never experienced that feeling would never truly understand.

For this reason, a lot of the wealthy frequent dungeons. And in these dungeons, there is always a need for people to follow them around. And those people are bagboys – the official term is a porter.

Yeah yeah. I'm one of those porters.

Porters follow around those rich and spoiled kids who call themselves hunters so they can hunt as safely as possible while we can pick up their dropped items and loot for them. They hate picking up dropped items so that job falls under my description. Our job doesn't end there. We also have to compliment them and hype up their kill when they are successful in hunting a monster. (What are we, seven?) But I can't be too annoyed because how much we get paid depends on their mood. So if I can get paid more, I'll compliment their kill all day. If you're lucky, you might even get paid a tip of several hundred times your normal amount.

But, of course, today was not that day. 100 dollars. Treating me like some kind of a beggar.

The party head must have noticed something in my expression because he suddenly made a frown.

“You have a problem?”

“No sir.”

Tap Tap

“Then don’t make that face. It might start to really upset me. Understand?”

The jerk nudged my shoulder as he started to laugh. Not wanting to let anything slip again, I looked down. This much I can handle.

I’m currently renting a room in a 3 story red bricked private home. I’ll be 26 this year. I did graduate from college but in this recession, there was no way for me to find employment so I ended up going from being a porter part time to doing it full time. I hope you don’t look down on me just because I’m a porter though. If you want to stay alive in a dungeon, you still need to have at least some degree of skill.

In that sense, I’m quite capable I guess. It’s pretty rare to find someone who can porter at a level 2 dungeon at my age. A porter’s most important skill is survival skills. Because in a dungeon, there is no one there to save a porter’s life.

Ringringring-

My cell phone rang. I took it out of my pocket. It’s an older model with a cheap LCD screen. Those guys with money have the new smartphones with the touch panel. Not me though. I only need my phone to be able to make/take calls and send/receive messages. Nothing fancy. It was a good broker buddy of mine. Song Minhan. In his mid thirties, he has over 10 years of experience as a broker, and we’ve worked together for a good number of years since he

always seems to find me good porter jobs. If you were to do any sort of freelancing, a good broker is a must have.

“Yes. It is I, your ever vigilant pretty boy porter, Jeon Sangmin!”

“Can you please change the way you answer your phone?”

“The ladies love it though.”

“Yeah right. I need a porter quickly. Do you have time?”

“Just one moment while I check my schedule.”

“Stop being funny. I know you don’t have that much work these days.”

“I just did one today.”

“Great. You’re warmed up then right? Come to Ansan by 3.”

“Ansan? There’s only level 1 dungeons in that area.”

“Don’t worry. The pay ain’t bad. This time, Severance Hospital owner’s son is going into a dungeon for the first time. They said they needed a skilled porter so I recommended you. Shake a leg and get over here will ya?”

“How much?”

“Your fee is 200. Tip is separate.”

“What. Not bad for a level 1 fee. How much are you taking?”

100 was the normal fee for level 1 portering. Level 2 portering was usually 200 but there were a lot of times the fee was docked as was the case today.

“I take exactly how much I’m supposed to so don’t worry your pretty little head alright? How many years do you think I’ve been doing this to play around with money like that?”

“I was just asking. Just wondering if sitting around and making money might be worth doing.”

“I take 100. Feel better?”

“What. Thief. Someone gets to sit around and make that much while others risk their lives for just 200.”

“Someone eavesdropping would think that you were going into level 10 dungeons or something. Are you coming or not?”

“I’m coming. You said 3 right?”



“Yeah. And don’t come at 3 am like you did last time.”

“Yes, yes sir Song Minhan. I am the sowee.”

Jeez how much longer is he going to bring that up. I mean I only did that once.

I quickly checked the time. It was three, so two hours to get to Ansan was doable. I hurried over to the closest train station.

# Chapter 2

---

This world messed up big time. About 50 years ago, monsters appeared. They came from the ground, the air, and the ocean. Blah. They made a sudden attack on the human race and we were almost wiped out. The weapons we had developed over thousands of years were useless. These guys had crazy tough skin and it took dozens of bullets to bring one down. We had about a couple hundred of those just in our country alone.

We shot our guns, mobilized tanks, and shot out missiles too. But these monsters learned how to protect themselves. They would dig themselves underground to evade our weapons and were smart enough to only come out at night to continue their attacks.

We were barely able to keep the city from falling to complete disaster by mobilizing a bunch of soldiers but it didn't end there. As time passed on, a huge crater appeared within the city. The black hole got bigger and bigger until one day a stream of monsters started spilling out of it. We tried everything. Shot into it, threw grenades into it...but it didn't stop them.

North Korea activated a nuclear bomb. Of course, right? That incident didn't help anyone but caused their immediate collapse. They got absorbed by China. What used to be North Korea became an autonomous region of China.

Later there was an incident where a scout actually went into the black hole and came back out...alive. He had personally witnessed the monsters that were teaming within that hole and somehow lived through it. Nothing short of a miracle, I say.

Using his testimony and realizing that more monsters lived in that hole, a whole army was sent in to take care of them all. The results were disastrous. The monsters in the hole turned out to be way more powerful than the ones that were running around outside. And on top of that, inside the cramped space of the dungeon, the army was not able to fully use strategies or anything else that would have helped.

Humanity had no choice but to create a defensive line around the hole and resort to just trying to fight the weaker monsters spilling from out of it. And then..a man appeared.

Lee Wheeseung.

This man, equipped with only a sword, had gone inside the dungeon and wiped out the monsters there. He had killed monsters, whose hides could not be penetrated by even bullets, with just one blade. Not only did this catch the attention of the country, but it was spread far and wide across the world.

The secret to his success was in none other than the skillbook that the monsters had dropped. These guys rarely die but when they do, they drop their skillbook. Luckily, Lee Wheeseung had attained one of these – the “Pedro” skillbook. He learned its contents. Being the first of mankind to be able to clear a dungeon, he basically monopolized the fortune found in the dungeons.

From the fortune he acquired as he cleared dungeon after dungeon, he began to gain fame as well across all of Korea. He

became the best hunter as well as the biggest celebrity. Recruitments for commercials came wave after wave, he even made some music here and there, and appeared in several movies too. At one ridiculous point, he was the number 1 presidential candidate. But hating politics, he never ran. If he did run, he would have been made President. No doubt about that. Ultimately he ended up marrying the leader of Korean's most popular girl group and lived happily ever after.

If you really think about it though, you can't really say that it was all his luck. Honestly, if the Pedro skillbook was picked up by anyone else, all of that luck would have belonged to someone else. He just happened to be at the right place at the right time and attained everything from it.

“Hmm...?”

I opened my eyes to see that the bus had passed Shinchon and was headed toward Yeonshin. That woke me the hell up. I quickly got up and rushed to get off. The bus heading back where I came from hadn't arrived yet. Looking at the bus schedule, it would be another 20 minutes until it would come.

I looked around as I stood at the bus stop. There was a female student with earphones on listening to music. And there was a middle aged looking salaryman. That was it.

Several busses passed by and just as I was about to yawn from the wait, the 1500 bus I'd been waiting for finally arrived.

Something was weird. The bus was jiggling around like it was dancing and didn't seem like it would stop.

“Shit.”

There was blood all over the inside of the bus. A monster was going to town in there. The driver looked as if he was already dead. The bus was speeding – the driver probably died with his foot still on the pedal.

Crash!

The rumbling bus crashed into a store nearby. It overturned from the impact and the monster peeked out of the wide open door.

I screamed bloody murder at the top of my lungs.

“Run!”

The middleaged man started to run with horror on his face, but the girl was just standing there reading her damn book. I think I remember seeing this exact scene in a movie one time. A monster would appear but the girl extra, reading a book with earphones in her damn head, gets eaten.

Shit shit shit

I grabbed her hand and started running.

“What, what are you doing?!”

“There’s no time to explain! If you need to know, just look behind us!”

“Hee eek?”

The girl collapsed to the ground. Looks like she lost the strength from her legs. What could I do? I just scooped her up. Remember I told you about those squats? Came in handy, didn’t it? I practice 3 sets of squats. Carrying a girl who looked to be barely 100 pounds was nothing to me.

The problem now was, would I be able to outrun that monster.

Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

I turned to look at the monster. Probably 3 meters tall. Had some thick skin with a muscular body. Kind of had a humanoid body with two 30cm ish claws. Its teeth looked sharp as hell too. A narrow jaw...rather than developed to better eat its food...it seemed like it was designed to slaughter.

I thought a moment about whether I could go up against this

thing. Even if it didn't have those claws and teeth, it had the advantage of longer limbs and bigger reach.

The answer was clear.

Run for my life.

“Haaaaa!”

Crash!

The entire bus station crumpled like a piece of paper.

That thing was a level 4 monster at the very least.

Would I even be able to outrun it?

Swoop!

Crash!

Shit. It jumped over me and landed up front. The concrete had scattered and split from the impact. A chunk hit my cheek and made a long cut.

“Craaaaap!”



It began to swing its hand.

I jumped backwards to keep out of its reach.

Crasssh!

“Ugh..”

My back. I could feel a cool and painful sensation. I didn't have time to check the damage. I can see the thing thinking for a minute so it's not entirely stupid.

The girl was on the concrete floor crawling to move away. I could see her black stockings ripping from rubbing against the hard ground.

I hurriedly got up and grabbed her by the arm again.

Swish!

Crash!

The monsters claw swiped at the area we were in just a moment ago.

At least there was one hope.

‘It’s slower than I thought.’

Compared to its strength and crazy jumping skills, his movements were on the slow side. Otherwise, we would have been caught in this monster’s claw right when the girl and I attempted to roll away.

I took that small bit of hope and ran like hell. We just might get away. Shit.

# Chapter 3

---

....was what I thought.

But the monster caught up to us in mere moments. I was overcome with a nauseating feeling as I stared up at the gigantic monster blocking my path. It was funny looking and scary at the same time. I couldn't really pick which one exactly. With his head that was small like a bird atop a thick and muscular body...am I right? I also couldn't figure out if his red body was its natural color or if it was from all the blood...

I could feel the heat from its body radiating onto my face.

Then his nasty sharp claws rushed towards me as he swiped his monster hand.

Swoosh!

I just threw the girl I had been pulling along into an open door of a nearby shop.

“Kyaaa!”

Crash!

The girl crashed into the building and I rebounded away from the force of my own push.

Sqeaaak!

That was the sound of the monster pulling its sharp claw from out of the ground I had been on just moments before. Shit. How the hell am I supposed to run away from this...

Bang!

Just then, a vehicle right in front of me flipped over on top of me. On reflex, I jumped and curled myself into a protective ball. What else could I do? I'm not a damn basketball player so I couldn't really jump over the car now could I? The least I could do was get as low and small as possible so I could hopefully have a smaller mass to get hit by.

Crash!

Crrraaah!

I thought I should roll out of the way but the impact of the car crashing down was so strong that when I came to, I had already involuntarily rolled away.

Euk. Damn. I probably broke something somewhere. I just know it.

Creeaaak!

Crash!

Then another car came towards me and hit me before hitting a wall. Imagine my annoyance when I saw that the driver had his stupid eyes closed the moment he plowed into me. I don't know what he was doing while he was driving, but it seemed he probably didn't even see the monster chasing after me.

“Euuk..”

I got to my feet painfully. I turned to look back to the car that hit me but the driver had his head atop the steering wheel and remained motionless. He probably died. And if he didn't, the monster would likely kill him.

I watched as the monster headed towards the broken car and felt all sorts of selfish giddiness overwhelming my insides. Should I run? If I run right now I could probably live.

“Shit!”

Instead of away, I ran towards the car. If I just left this situation and the driver was alive, he would be doomed for sure. I couldn't do that in good conscience. I had to get that monster's attention no matter what.

But how?

Can I even kill that thing?

Creeaaak!

Squeaaaak!

A bunch of cars began crashing into one another nearby. It became a chain collision.

Crash! Honk! Crash!

Then the last car in that chain spun in a circle several times before hitting the monster.

CRASH!

The monster was thrown upon impact with a loud noise. No matter how strong a monster is, a car must weight a minimum of 1 ton. Of course if something like that slams into you, it would throw you.

“What...”

Stomp! Stomp!

I stared on as one car after another began to pile upon the monster.

Slam! Crash!

Screeech!

When I shook my head and looked carefully, I saw that the monster was collapsed on the ground with black blood flowing from his mouth. A truck with a bunch of crap on its truckbed was resting atop the monster with its front wheel still spinning. I could see that the driver of the truck was still in shock.

Screech!

I could now see the monster trying futilely to get out from under the vehicle, but it was not in a good enough shape to do so. However, the resilience and recovery ability of a monster is not to be laughed at. Without more attacks, especially attacks to his vitals, there was no doubt that he would recover very soon.

I hurriedly looked around me. Whether it was luck that the cars had slammed into it or kindness from the drivers, it didn't matter now. What I needed now was something that I could use to kill it.

I needed a hunter. It didn't matter if he was armed with a sword or a gun, I just needed someone who could kill this thing.

“Shiiiiiiiiiiiiit!!!”



There was none. Everyone had run away. Amazing. That was fast. And no one who can get rid of this monster in sight. After running through all the options, I came to just one conclusion. I had to do it.

I tried to think of just how I could do that. I was just a porter. I was able to witness a lot of monster killings. Though they are ridiculously hard to kill, it was definitely possible. If you cut their throat or brain, they would die.

I couldn't possibly try to cut that thing's throat at my skill level. The only thing I could do was to try and make some kind of damage to its brain. And I knew just how to do it.

There were many many different kinds of monsters. Though their heart can be anywhere on the body depending on the variation, the brain is always in the same place. I guess this is true for all living things. Probably because the eyes are needed to identify dangers quickly, and the brain needs to be close to the eyes to communicate these signals quickly enough to do something about it. Now the bigger the monster, the closer the brain needs to be to the eyes to lessen the signal distance.

Huff. Huff.

My breathing was ragged. I kicked off a sharp piece of a window from a broken car door. Would this work?

I'm a porter who doesn't even have 1 skillbook. Though I probably have more experience than most, I just don't have the

skills to kill a monster. But there was no time to waste.

“Ahhhhh!”

I ran towards the monster that was now squirming enough to almost be able to come out from under the truck that was pinning it.

Then I stabbed at its neck with the broken shard.

Thunk!

The first stab bounced off. As soon as the sharp glass hit its cheek, it just bounced right off without doing any damage at all.

Gnash!

The monster had outstretched its neck and came towards me with its sharp teeth. It caught me by surprise and I came down with the sharp shard one more time.

Stab!

Though it was by reflect, this time was a success. My stab had landed the sucker right in the eye.

## Sirens

I could hear sirens in the background. I stepped just a bit away from the monster's slain body and just collapsed to the ground right then and there.

The thing had finally stopped squirming. I think it's finally dead. I couldn't really believe it. To think that I had killed it with my own hands.

I balled my hands into two tight fists.

I killed it.

"What? Did this bastard die already?"

Right then, someone spoke as if he was truly annoyed. He had a sturdy build dressed in a black armor with a similar colored sword. You could tell he was a hunter with just one look.

"It could very well still be alive. Go cut it's throat just to be safe."

The girl standing next to him responded. She was dressed in a tight red armor accented with leather, and she was beautiful. The girl I had just rescued was nothing compared to this one.

"Shit. How boring."

The guy mumbled as he headed towards the dead monster wielding his sword. With a small “swish” sound, he had easily cut off the monster’s head. Judging from how the blood merely leaked instead of squirt out, I could tell it was already dead.

“It is dead,”

“Damn. How dare he dies from just being hit by a truck. I guess it was bad luck for him.”

As he kicked at the rolling head while walking away, his eyes fell on me for the first time and said.

“Civilian? Don’t worry. I killed the monster so there is no more danger here.”

“If you were honest, you didn’t really kill it though.”

The girl laughed.

“What does it matter. I cut off its head so it’s the same thing as me killing it.”

If a monster dies, its body leaves nothing but its essence. It usually takes about 10 minutes, but no one knows what this essence would be. The higher the level, usually, they would drop more useful items and better ores. If you gather up the ores and

refine them, you could end up either with something plentiful or something really rare. The most common ore would be the Monazite. You could get about 1,000 dollars for about 10kg of this.

Very rarely, a monster will drop a weapon, armor, or a skillbook. If they drop something like this, you could exchange it for the lord knows how much.

Obviously the people who get to keep these dropped items are the ones who killed the monster. It seemed that the couple had purposely cut off the monster's head just so they could lay claim to the dropped items.

But I'm not an idiot who will let someone take what belongs to me right in front of me.

"I'm sorry but I'm the one who killed it."

"What?"

The guy stared at me as if he couldn't believe what I was saying. It was obvious to anyone that I was not a hunter with just one look at me. I didn't have any weapon on me and didn't even look like I'd be any good in a fight. Of course I did do my daily squats. But that doesn't really help in killing a monster now does it.

"Then this glass...you did it?"

The girl in the leather pulled out the glass from the monster's

eye. I nodded my head. I could see a sort of curiosity spark in the girl's expression. Then she asked me a question that didn't really seem like a question but more like a demand...

“How could someone like you who isn't even a hunter slay this huge monster?”

“Can't you tell just from looking? He was pretty much already down from being hit by a slew of cars. All he did was stab it in the eye.”

The guy said with annoyance.

If I were honest with myself, his answer was spot on so I couldn't really say anything. I just nodded again quietly. As soon as I nodded, the curiosity in her face disappeared instantly. I felt a tinge of regret. I thought about maybe concocting a lie in a split second before thinking better of it.

“What can you expect from a civilian?”

“No. I just thought maybe. Nevermind.”

The girl made a small laugh. To think that they would say all this right in front of me. Rude as hell. Rude rude rude.

Unfortunately, I could tell that even with all their rudeness they had the skill to back it up. Sword, armor, it was all expensive stuff. Nothing cheap. At the very least, it was level 5 quality.

But I didn't sit there looking at them in awe. If they had level 5 gear in their mid twenties, there were only two ways they could have acquired it. Either they had a lot of money, or their parents had a lot of money. That's it. Good for you.

They were probably the son and daughter of a rich family. A great new world this is. Where if you just have money, you can acquire the skillbook and items you need to become strong without any effort at all. Did you know there is also a beauty skillbook? But something like that is super rare and sought after so it probably costs a couple million dollars.

Then if you just buy a bunch of skillbooks, you could become super duper ultra powerful right? Luckily this isn't the case. There is a catch. A person can only use and have one skillbook at a time. If someone gets a new skillbook, the abilities of the first skillbook disappear. If you had a beauty skillbook, then you just return back to your normal self and if you had an attack-related skillbook, then that skill would disappear instantly to be replaced by your new skill.

Then can a person only have the ability to retain one skillbook at a time? No. You guessed it. A skillbook appeared that can expand a person's ability to retain more than one skillbook. This skillbook pretty much never appears as a drop item. They can be found, however, at the hunter's market – the On/Offline. It probably sells for about a billion dollars at least.

Surprised? It's true.

Other things at the On/Offline go on sale at one point or another, but this particular skillbook is famous for never going on sale. That's how expensive, important, and rare it is. This is something that someone like me could never even hope to lay my eyes on. If I had that kind of money in the first place, why the hell would I bother being a hunter?

A billion dollars. If I had that much money, there was something I wanted to do.

I would buy a yogurt cup and just lick the yogurt off the top and throw it away.

My dream.



## Chapter 4

---

“So what you’re saying is that whatever this thing drops is yours? For a civilian, you’re not stupid.”

The boy said this in a tired voice as if it was really a waste of his time. It seemed he didn’t want to turn around and leave empty handed after coming out all this way. But this was a rule that all hunters abided by.

For someone who had level 5 quality equipment, I was sure they could go without a dropped item or two and be just fine. In any case, all that would drop from this monster would be a monazite or a bastnazite. Though it differs by weight, if you sold it, it’ll probably amount to 1,000 dollars if anything.

Of course this looked to be about a level 4 monster so there was a possibility of a more expensive item. But it would be 10,000 dollars at the most. There was zero chance these guys would ignore the hunter rule for something that costs so little to them.

“I’m a porter. That’s why I know that much.”

“Hm....is that right? But there isn’t any witness who can say that you killed it now is there?”

“If you don’t believe me go and watch the CCTV? You can probably see it in the car’s blackbox too,”

“Ah, is that so?”

The boy responded as if it were a pity and turned back around. The monster was starting to disappear.

“Let’s go. The cops will be here soon. There’s no point in us being investigated for dallying around.”

The girl in the red said. I could see her regular clothes under the leather armor, which meant this was a summon type armor. From what I heard, summon type armor is known to be at least over 100 million at the cheapest. Christ almighty. It makes you wonder what kind of people their parents are to easily buy these things for their kids as if it were nothing.

“Wait. We came all this way. We should at least see what drops before we go.”

“So you can steal it if it’s something expensive?”

The girl’s lip curled up a bit in derision. She obviously said it to get a rise out of him but the boy pretended he didn’t care.

“Even if it is me, I wouldn’t do something as low as that. I’m just curious, that is all. Wondering what exactly would drop for Mr. Civilian Porter.”

“Do what you want.”

Listening to the two hunter's conversation, I felt a bit uncomfortable and stared off at the dead body of the monster. Even though the guy said that, it still didn't put my heart at ease. If possible, I was even hoping that something cheap would fall out.

"Look here. Civilian. This is probably fate too so we should at least exchange names. I'm Storm Storm's Ahn Kyubum. That girl over there is Setting Moon Sword's Kim Sowul."

The word Civilian in and of itself was a neutral word but every time he said it, it sounded like it could very well be a curse word.

"Jeon Sangmin. Level 2 Porter."

"Oh? Really? That means you have some skill. If you're a level 2 porter at that age, that means you must be pretty good right?"

Even if I was really good, I was no Level 5 Hunter.

"Ah ah. Don't look at me like that. Seriously. We both know that a hunter and a porter live in two completely different worlds. Ah. Who knows. Maybe if you work hard for 10 years then you just might be able to go into a dungeon with me. You know, people at high levels don't really use porters but I'm different. Because if there isn't someone following behind me to pick up all my things, it gets pretty annoying you see?"

"Thank you for thinking of me but I have no thoughts on ever

entering a Level 5 dungeon. I only have one life.”

“Did I say I was Level 5?”

“I made an educated guess. Expensive gear on top of not being afraid in approaching a Level 4 monster – I assumed you would be Level 5 at the least.”

“Good eye. But I could also be higher than a Level 6 then, no?”

“If you were at that level, you would never have come around all the way here for this.”

“I guess you’re right. You’re pretty smart.”

“Something anyone can do honestly.”

My guess was right. Well, it’s not really something to celebrate. And having to listen to all this crap from a guy who’s probably a couple years younger than me...sheesh.

Truth be told, there is never really a porter who would go into a dungeon higher than a level 4. Without any skill, you couldn’t hope to come out alive after going up against a level 4 monster. There is no way a hunter would give a damn about a porter’s life so your best bet was to just never put yourself in that situation in the first place. And on top of that, any use a porter can bring to a hunter is null and void at that level.

This is because there is almost no one who enters a level 4 and up dungeon for leisure. I mean, who in their right mind would willingly go into a dungeon for fun where you could easily die from one false move. Now that I think about it, anyone who enters a level 4 dungeon is either a skilled hunter who goes there to gain a super rare item or to periodically clear a dungeon to keep it from getting congested.

Seeing that it was so dangerous, porters were barred from entering any dungeons that were level 4 and higher. But laws are there for people who will abide by them. Those who don't listen won't. Every so often you will hear of a porter dying inside of a high level dungeon...which makes you wonder who really enforces that law.

“Well, if that's the case then...”

Ahn Kyubum just shook his shoulders and turned to look at the disappearing monster's body once more. I shook the dirt off my butt and got up.

“Where do you think you're going?”

“Instead of just sitting here, I should probably go and rescue those people instead.”

I pointed to the people still passed out in the cars. The cars involved in the collision were about 7. From there only 4 people were ok and had left their vehicles while the driver of the car that

had first hit me and 3 more people were still in their broken cars.

“I see. Have fun.”

“You don’t want to help?”

“Me? Why?”

“I’ll help.”

Kim Sowul came forward. I said thank you with a nod and went with her to get the passed out drivers from their cars. None of them sustained any real injuries thanks to their airbags. That was a relief. This could definitely have ended much much worse.

“Whew. Thanks. It looks like we pretty much got them all. It seems no one really got hurt so as soon as we get them loaded up into the ambulance, they should be just fine.”

I made another “thank you” gesture to Kim Sowul. A hunter doing this of their own accord is a very rare thing. This is probably because they are used to others bowing down to them. Add to that, she even touched a civilian. I can honestly say I’ve never seen that happen.

After laying down all the wounded into a row for the ambulance, I returned to where the truck was. It seemed it would take a long time for the monster to disappear. I sat on a stone nearby and watched the slowly evaporating monster. In that time, the

ambulance finally appeared to take the wounded away. It was strange that the police sirens I had heard earlier still didn't appear.

“What? Is that a skillbook?”

Ahn Kyubum had uttered.

What?

I jumped up from my seat in surprise. What was left over from the monster's disappearance was most certainly a skillbook. Just like the word, a skillbook is a book...literally. The cover and thickness of it was pretty thin but it had the telltale sign of a true skillbook – its reflective cover.

“Oh ho. Would ya look at this?”

Ahn Kyubum quickly snatched at the skillbook before I could. It was a relief that you could only acquire the properties of a skillbook from reading it cover to cover and it wasn't something you could get instantly. And I was sure this bastard already had a skillbook so he probably wasn't going to read it and risk losing his current one to be replaced by a lesser one.

Ahn Kyubum looked at me briefly before saying.

“This bastard has some luck doesn't he? To think that he could get a skillbook in one try...”

He licked his lips as he looked back and forth from me to the skillbook. It was killing me. I walked toward him with an outstretched arm.

I could see the corner of his lip turn up into a cruel smile.

“What? You want it? Well, you did say it was yours huh? Then here, take it.”

After saying that, he stretched out the skillbook to me. As soon as I tried to take it, he pulled his arm back and started cackling.”

“That quickly? Let me just look at it real quick to see what kind it is.”

“Come on just give it to him. It’s something you won’t need anyway.”

Kim Sowul said. Not only was she beautiful but she had the heart of an angel. My love. I turned to look at her. She must have seen the desperation in my face. She let out a sigh and walked toward her partner.

“What’s the price?”

“Um...wait.”



Ahn Kyubum turned to the next page. The laughter in his face was immediately replaced with a much more serious expression. Looking at it, I thought it could even be a rare skillbook. Shit. If it was anything higher than a 5 Level item, I was pretty sure he wouldn't let it go easily.

I began to let out a silent prayer that it was a useless and cheap skillbook. Because if he decided to steal it, I knew I couldn't just lay down and let it slide. Kim Sowul snatched at the skillbook and read the page. Then she started laughing like crazy.

“What is this? Level 0? There's a skillbook like this? Since when?”

“I know. This is the first time I've ever seen a Level 0 skillbook. Oh no. You must have been so excited. I'm so sorry. L Sadface.”

Ahn Kyubum kept snickering as he looked at me. Did he purposely make that face to trick me into getting excited? What. A. Jerk.

But I was grateful that he wouldn't steal the skillbook. Even if it was level 0, who knows! It could be worth some money. Even a level 1 skillbook sells for about 1 million dollars so if it was a Level 0 one, I'm pretty sure I can make at least 10,000 dollars. You could say that it was much better than even getting a monazite!

“Even though it's not something we'd want, I'm pretty sure that it could be very useful to a porter.”

Kim Sowul tossed the skillbook to me. I caught the book in two hands and carefully hid it in my clothes for safekeeping.

“This brat. I’m not going to steal it so don’t worry. Who the heck would steal something like that.”

“It might be useless to you but not to everyone.”

I had retorted on reflex. And I knew the moment I said this.

That I was screwed.

I didn’t even have time to apologize.

Slam!

“...huh?”

Slam!

Ahn Kyubum had grabbed my hair in his fist and slammed my head down right into the ground. I didn’t even see him coming. I held back a moan with my head still on the ground. I had an intuition that I should not open my mouth.

Slam!

Shit. It felt like all the bones in my head would shatter. What the heck kind of monster strength was this? Shit. No matter how strong his armor was, to unleash this kind of power from such a small arm was ridiculous.

“Will you stop? It doesn’t look good.”

Kim Sowul tried to calm him down. Damn. I was so so thankful for those words.

“You’re taking the civilian’s side?”

“Yeah.”

“But then again. You used to be a civilian too.”

Ahn Kyubum returned teasingly.

“Didn’t we agree that we wouldn’t talk about that.”

“Oh, did we? I’m sorry. I guess I have faulty memory.”

Slam!

“Euk...”

I couldn’t hold back any more and let out a small moan. It really

felt like my skull would rip apart. This bastard. Who does he think he is. Kim Sowul spoke again.

“Are you trying to kill him?”

“I’m thinking about it.”

“There’s a lot of people here.”

“Who cares.”

Ahn Kyubum retorted as he cackled a bit.

This was dangerous. Is he really trying to kill me? He must be joking right? To think that he’d kill a human so easily. That’s crazy.

ROOOOOOOAR!

At that moment, we could hear the cry of another monster. From the sound of it, it was at least 500 meters tall. It seemed that there was one more. I could now hear the police sirens once more. This was probably the reason why the police hadn’t come here until now.

Kim Sowul spoke as she faced the sound of the commotion.

“I guess that’s the other one. Leave him alone.”

“This guy. He really has good luck now doesn’t he.”

Ahn Kyubum finally let go of my head. After letting out a sigh of relief, I held back my breath again in case he changed his mind. Seeing me like that, Ahn Kyubum let out a booming laugh. When I stared at him blankly, he responded.

“Keu Keu Keu. You won’t die. Bastard. I was just playing around. To think you took it to heart.”

“Stop. We should get going.”

“Alright. I was just about to go anyway. Maybe we’ll see you again. Civilian.”

Ahn Kyubum jumped several meters high into the air and ran with such speed that he disappeared in an instant. Kim Sowul glanced at me for a second before disappearing just as quickly.

“Whew.”

I wobbled as I stood up. As I stretched out here and there I could feel that my back was a bit raw. It felt like I may have bruised my rib bone or something. On top of getting hit by a damn car, after the beating from Ahn Kyubum, there was no way I was fine.

But today's work wasn't over yet. The bus station was pretty much gone, but the bus should still be in working order. I figured since I could still move around, I should finish up this evening's job and then go to the hospital afterward. What. A. Day.

# Chapter 5

---

I got off at my stop and stood at the entrance to the mountains. After checking to see that there was no one around, I opened the skillbook to see what was inside.

The skill name was “effort”.

“Hmm...”

Weird. So weird. I couldn’t tell what kind of skill this was just by the name. I thought maybe I should just try learning it, but then again I realized I shouldn’t waste my one skill slot with a level 0 skillbook. There was another reason why I couldn’t learn this.

I wanted to become a hunter.

I even planned which skillbook I would buy. “Bursting light” – a level 1 active skill. If you just had this skill, you could pierce through a monster’s hide without the aid of hunter equipment. I had plenty of dungeon experience and I had saved up to about 8000. If I could sell this skillbook, I would be able to get to my goal that much faster.

Thinking about this as I was walking, it wasn’t too long before I reached the dungeon. The dungeons in Ansan are known to be the lowest level 1 dungeons. Though it had recently become the butt of jokes among hunters for being an “easy dungeon” with the advent of so many high-level hunters, there was once a time when this dungeon was considered highly dangerous. And it was.

“I came too quickly.”

I looked around for the first-time hunter that my broker had told me about. I was about to call but decided it would be better to just wait until the promised time.

There were actually quite a few people aside from myself. They all looked pretty well dressed too. Their armor shined brightly and their blades looked sharp.

“Could it be them?”

At the base of a small hill, I could see a group of people dressed similarly standing around. Four teenage boys, one middle-aged man, and one girl in her mid-twenties holding a huge backpack. Six in total.

I was puzzled. It was standard for there to only be 5 people in a group embarking into a dungeon. This was because the admission price started at 5 people.

“Are you the person that Mr. Song had recommended as a porter?”

The middle aged man asked me as I walked towards them. He was clothed in a robe that covered his entire body from neck to ankle but it didn't cover up his bald head and round stomach. It was safe to assume that he was the leader of the party.



“Mr. Jung. Doesn’t this young man look much too young? I cannot trust him.”

The one with red dyed hair and piercing on his lip as well as both ears asked as he glanced me up and down. I didn’t know that a rich family’s kid did things like that, but I guess I’m not always right.

“I am a level 2 porter, Jeon Sangmin. And your name is...?”

“You don’t need to know. Just do your job. You know that if we catch you stealing any items, we’re going to cut off your hands right?”

“My experience is 6 years. You don’t have anything to worry about.”

I tried to respond as professionally as possible. You meet all sorts of people doing this for six years. I was good at hiding my derision.

He walked to the girl carrying the heavy backpack.

“Sooah. Why don’t you hand that backpack over to that kid.”

“Oh no? But I need this so I can...”

“If I ask something of you, you must do as I say ok?” In a slimy tone

“Yes sir.”

The girl looked at me apologetically and handed it over. It seemed there was a good amount of equipment loaded in this backpack from the weight of it. I could tell that it was about 20 kg. Seeing that she could carry this all the way up here without breaking a sweat, she was probably a porter as well.

There was no reason for me to ask why they needed two porters in one party. From the way he talked to the girl porter, the answer was so obvious. He wanted her with him to lighten his mood.

This isn't the first time I've seen something like this happen.

Ugh watch the face. I can't let him see my disgust. Carefulll.

“Will it be all 7 of you?”

The person stationed in front of the dungeon's entrance collecting the admissions asked. Dungeons were managed by the country, so the person collecting the entrance fee was most certainly a government official. It wasn't really a high up position. It was more of an entry level position that the newbies took turns doing.

The starting salary of a civil servant was about 40k. This was about double a normal person's salary. Most private businesses went bankrupt so government jobs became the best ones

somehow. So these kids collecting admissions at the entrance would be considered the elite of the elites of South Korea.

“Two are porters. Including myself, there are 5 hunters.”

Mr. Jung shoved to the front and held out a card. It was probably a corporate card. Level 1 dungeon admissions started at 3,000 for a party of five. Though less expensive compared to the 5,000 admission fee for Level 2 dungeons, it was still not cheap.

“We usually only allow one porter. If you would like to take both into the dungeon, there will be an additional fee.”

“Geesh. Such a stiff rule. How much is it?”

“300 dollars.”

“Just put it all on this card. It looks like we’re about to spend 600 just on hiring a porter.”

Mr. Jung glanced at me. Why is he looking at me. I’m the one who’s really going to be working. If he wants to get mad at someone, it should be the punk who brought the girl.

The high walls had barbed wire curled at the top and when you walked in, the very first thing you could see was an emergency ward. This was probably so that any accidents that happened within the dungeon could be attended to right away at the location. The doctors at this dungeon had healing skills at the very

minimum. This was because stab wounds and other injuries happened quite often within a dungeon where this was necessary.

“Do you mind if we rest a bit here before heading in?”

The boy carrying a golden bow asked with an anxious expression. When the red haired boy nodded his head, the middle aged man responded.

“Yes sir. You have done well walking so far up until this point. We shall rest. We have plenty of time so there should be no problem in resting for at least 30 minutes.”

Everyone went into a café except for me. It just seemed that I was naturally excluded from going into such a nice atmosphere, so I stayed back.

While waiting outside the café, I observed the boy with the golden arrow. From the way everyone was speaking to him, it was obvious that the wealthy son was this kid. What was most dangerous in clearing a dungeon was not the red haired and cheeky boy nor was it the extremely slow moving Mr. Jung. It was a beginner like the bow boy.

No matter how much you treat a dungeon as if it were a playground, there is no quelling the fear of your first time. Especially with a boy who looks like he couldn't even kill a fly, he had an extremely high chance of turning tail and running as soon as he encountered a monster. If you have an expert and just follow his directions, it was easy to clear a level 1 dungeon without an

incident but boys like this had a hard time keeping their composure. Wherein lied the issue.

This is where big incidents can happen.

Well, I guess that was the whole reason why the broker had given me this job. It wouldn't make sense that the job would be easy if it paid \$200 in one shot. It's a good thing I have the skill to back it up.

“Hm..But isn't that Athena's bow?”

I fixed my eyes on the boy's weapon. One of my many talents includes examining and remembering all the items that pop up in the hunter market. Though everything there was so damn expensive that I couldn't even dream of buying it, I had put some items in my basket a few times before putting it back. Don't act like you've never done that before in your life.

Honestly, just doing that made me feel like those items in my basket were truly mine even if only for that moment. Happiness isn't too far away if you know just where to look.

Anyway, one of those items I had put into my basket one time or another was that golden bow. It seemed I had really taken a liking to it since I still remember the exact name of it even now. It was something you could use even without experience, and since it was a level 4 weapon, killing a level 1 monster with it was a foregone conclusion. The best thing about it was that the arrow could only hurt a monster and never a human. If any weapon had this

characteristic, the price of it automatically doubled. If you have a weapon of that caliber, anyone holding it could call themselves a hunter and get away with it.

And then there was that little fact about the golden color of it being so damn cool.

“Sangmin”

Tap.

Someone called out my name as they tapped me on the shoulder.

# Chapter 6

---

“Won Jongtak?”

“Oh. I thought you would have forgotten my name.”

“How could I?”

“To be honest we weren’t really all that close.”

“Well, that wasn’t the reason why I didn’t forget your name.”

Just as he said, we weren’t really close enough to call each other friends. We probably said hi to each other a handful of times in school and later when we met at a dungeon entrance by chance we exchanged a brief hello. We even had alcohol together once. But that was the first time and the last time about 2 years ago.

“Anyway it seems like we’re meeting after almost 2 years now. Did you graduate? I just left in the middle without really finishing.”

“Why?”

“The tuition seemed like a waste. I was going to be a porter anyway so I felt like there wasn’t really a point in me graduating. So I just told a white lie to my parents, a little white lie and kept the tuition money. I bought some equipment with that and here I

am.”

As Won Jongtak spoke, he spread out his arms and legs to show me the protective gear that was covering him. It wasn't quite hunter quality so it wasn't something that would really impress anyone, but the difference between having it and not having it was still huge. I have some protective gear myself.

Due to the heavy gear I always had to carry, I found myself reducing any protective gear to the bare minimum: Waist protector, head and neck protecting headgear, mail made from synthetic resin, and arm protectors. I also had a pair of fire resistant gloves.

My gear may look humble but all of it cost me nearly 10,000 dollars. I know. Ridiculous.

“Hey. It has been a while though so we should at least exchange numbers or something, don't you think?”

I wanted to stop the small talk and leave but this bastard grabbed my arm. I reluctantly gave him my business card.

“What is this? Pretty boy porter Jeon Sangmin? Ke ke ke. I guess nothing's really changed huh?”

“Is anything different with you?”

I grabbed and looked at the business card he handed over my



way. It had a black background with 'Ultimate Porter' written in bold white gothic print.

"Doesn't it leave quite an impression? Anyway, you're on their team right?"

This guy. He put his stupid arm over my shoulder and pointed at Mr. Jung and red hair.

When I turned my head a bit, I saw Mr. red hair secretly stroking the girl porter's leg. How is it that he can act exactly like you would expect him to act? Slimeball.

"Yeah, I guess."

"I know that guy...you'll have your hands full."

"Who? Red hair?"

"Yeh. He's the youngest son of a rich construction company owner. He has a bit of an anger management issue. So prepare yourself to get hit a few times."

"That kind of stuff is a given in this line of work. I got this."

I was about to tell him that I had just left another guy with anger management issues and almost had my head crushed in the process...but why bother?

“That’s not it though. This is all rumors...but I heard that he even raped some porter girl in a dungeon.”

“What the hell. What kind of a man can do something like that in a dungeon? I call bull.”

“Hey. I’m serious here. You don’t get why you got picked to do this job?”

“Why did I get picked. Tell me.”

“Because that piece of trash is always going around and doing that crap so they require another guy porter.”

“Yeah right. It’s not as if I’m the only guy porter who’ll take the job. And if he was bold enough to do something like that, would he even care what another porter thinks? Who do you think those guys are?”

“Well, don’t say I didn’t want you. You be careful. If you make one wrong move. Oh yeh. Should we go get a cup of coffee too? You buy. 😊 “

“As if.”

“Come on. I gave you some good tips. You know right? That I wouldn’t give any old person something juicy like this.”

“It didn’t even seem like good intel, and why should I buy you something just because you wanted to gossip a bit?”

“Heyyy. Loosen up.”

“I’ve had enough of you especially since what you pulled the last time 2 years ago, so just drop it ok?”

“2 years ago...? What are you talking about?”

“Don’t say you don’t remember”

“Um...I don’t remember. What happened two years ago?”

“Damn. I hate to say it with my own mouth but last time 2 years ago when we shared a drink, you ran away without paying the bill. You don’t remember?”

“Hm...Nah. I don’t. I do things like that quite often hehehe.”

“Geez you still go around pulling crap like that?”

Won Jongtak turned bright red in the face and stared daggers into me at this point.

“What do you want then? You want to smack me a good one?”

“...ah shit.”

Jongtak took a deep breath and said.

“Sorry.”

“If you know you’re sorry just don’t do it again.”

“To be honest, I haven’t really been doing so hot lately.”

“What do you mean lately. I’m sure it was since 2 years ago.”

“Aw come on.”

“For someone who dropped out of school to be a full time porter, are you crying about being poor now? And didn’t you just come out from clearing a dungeon? I’m pretty sure you have money in your pockets right now.”

“I’d gotten paid in advance and it went to all the collection agencies. And I didn’t get any tip”

“Collections? Where did you borrow money from?”

“Not long ago I got hurt pretty badly so I had to borrow money for the emergency ward.”

“You’ve got to be shitting me. That’s the worst!”

Porters, compared to other regular jobs, are paid on the pretty decent side. If he/she clears a dungeon once, they can earn from 100 to 1,000 dollars, and if they’re pretty popular they can do this work all day every day. Depending on how good you are, you have the potential to make 10,000 dollars a month.

But because it was so physically demanding, if you get hurt even once the hospital fees are ridiculous. And, adding insult to injury, you’re hurt so you can’t even earn any income. Because it isn’t a steady job in the first place, getting a loan from the bank is not an option and you have to resort to a loan shark. It’s all pretty shitty.

“You think I don’t know that?”

“You should have told your parents.”

“If they find out that I got hurt while being a porter, they’ll probably make me quit right away.”

“True.”

I couldn’t help but relate to him on that point. Because I pretty much lied to my parents that I was employed full time while instead I have been portering the whole time. I guess I pretty much lied to myself saying it would be fine once I became a famous hunter and I gave them a lot of money to compensate.

I pretended to fall for whatever garbage he was spewing and bought him a cup of coffee before getting up. I figured there was no point in butting heads with someone who was in the same occupation and similar situation as me. I could definitely get the feeling that he played me as I watched him shaking my hand gleefully and trotting off down the hill but, well, I shouldn't be too stingy over a stupid cup of coffee.

If you look at a dungeon from the outside, it looks like an elliptical black hole. Where a dungeon appears can really vary, but they were most common in a mountain or forest. No one knows why. Well. No one even knows why the monsters appeared so of course no one would know why the dungeons appeared either. Duh. Honestly, 50 years had come to pass since they first appeared so there isn't really anyone who is curious as to the reason why, any more. To all of us, it's now just a normal thing.

Dungeons vary in all sorts of ways. If I were to try and explain every single kind of dungeon, a whole book wouldn't be enough. But below are the most important points:

1. You can go into a dungeon and come out of it of your own free will.
2. The dungeon automatically resets after it is completed.
3. The monsters appearing in a dungeon are random. The only rule is that the monsters appear according to the dungeon's level.
4. The moment you die in a dungeon, all your items disappear.

Ha.Ha.Ha. Scary.

Looking at the black hole ahead of me, I swallowed a small lump. It's not my first rodeo but I can't help the little butterflies I get every single time. I could see red hair didn't like that I showed some anxiety but a hunter and porter's position are just so different.

To give you a general idea. Barring that the hunters didn't come here for the sole purpose of suicide, there is almost no chance of them dying. Case in point: those clothes they're all wearing, it may look super light and flimsy but they can withstand even a sniper rifle at close range. And the robe Mr. Jung is wearing? If he just rolls himself into a little protective ball, there's nothing that can hurt him.

“Well. Let us all go in now.”

Mr. Jung spoke.

The inside of the dungeon was pretty bright and it was big enough where five people could stretch out and hold hands and still have room. At 10 meters, the dungeon was also pretty high so there wouldn't be any problem of space.

“Let us proceed slowly. If a monster is to appear, please do not make any pre emptive attacks. It is best to follow my instructions.”

And so they began.

# Chapter 7

---

“What are you being so uptight for just a level 1 dungeon! Let’s just go in there and just do it in one shot! Come on!”

Red hair, Song Hansol, opened his mouth and made this unnecessarily stupid comment.

“There is a hunter who is here for the first time so we should try and be considerate of his pace.”

“YoungChul will be in the back just shooting his bow and arrow so it doesn’t really matter now, does it?”

“One can never be too cautious. But one can be too wreckless.”

“I guess if Mr. Jung says so. If scaredy cats like you come into the dungeon, what fun is it for any of us?”

“Ha ha. This is all for the safety of our young master.”

The torch lights were flickering against the dark cave walls.

The Ansan dungeons were known for its humanoid monsters. And among those that most frequently appeared were the goblins and cobalts. Both of these monsters stood at about only 1 meter and 50 centimeters tall but they are not to be underestimated. That was because the density of a monster’s muscle fibers were several times



stronger than that of a human.

Squeeze.

Mr. Jung, who was leading the party at the very front raised his hand and formed a fist. This meant there was a monster. I moved my head a bit to get a better look and spotted them.

There were three goblins sitting on the floor tearing into some meat in front of a smoking fire.

“First. I’ll cast a distraction spell. I will point to the monster for the initial attack with a laser pointer, then young master Hansol will distract it while the other two hunters can take care of it at that point.”

Mr. Jung was a support hunter. So he was the obvious choice in leading the raid.

“What happens if I kill them all?”

Song Hansol asked cockily as he took out a sword that was about 50cm long. The blade had a red glow to it that drew the eye. It went by the name Blood Sword. This was because as it drank more and more of its enemy’s blood, its attack power increased that much more.

“We will cross that bridge when we get there.”

“Hey. You can’t have all the fun.”

Park Jungbeh said. He was one of two hunters I had pegged as beggars in the beginning – this one had short hair and a fairly muscular body. The other one was pretty big too.

“Keu Keu. Don’t worry. I’ll kill just one. You two can figure out what to do with the other two. Ah. Actually why don’t you give one of them to Youngchul?”

Song Hansol asked as he looked back at the young master holding his bow.

“Me? I, I probably won’t be able to shoot at it right.”

“Hey. Kim Youngchul. We’re here in this lame dungeon because of you. You need to at least get one monster or it’ll be a waste.”

“Ok. I’ll try my best.”

“Then, everyone get ready.”

Mr. Jung took out a short cane from within his clothes. It was about an arm’s length with a green color at the end tip of one side. This sort of cane was for those who had magic abilities and used it for power amplification.

Mr. Jung started chanting and muttering incessantly under his breath as he held out his odd little cane and the green end began to glow bigger until it enveloped the goblins.

Bleh hh?

All three of them seemed to just lose it and began rolling around on the ground.

“Young master. You just need to kill the one with the red mark on its forehead.”

Mr. Jung had pointed out the nearest goblin with his laser pointer.

“Duh. Any idiot knows how to do that without anyone having to ask him.”

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Song Hansol had closed the 20 meter distance to the goblin in just three steps and stabbed at his target's heart.

Stab!

Keuuahhhhk!

The goblin victim suddenly came to again and began to scream out in pain. Even with the bloodcurdling scream, the other two goblins were still rolling about in the green light. I guess Mr. Jung's distraction magic was pretty strong.

Slice!

Song Hansol finished the goblin off by slicing at its throat and shutting off the sound. He was covered in a fountain of goblin blood as he headed back in our direction.

“Now. Who's next?”

“Okay. It's my turn.”

“Wait for me you bastard.”

As if just waiting for their turn, the two hunters ran out so suddenly that both me and Youngchul were almost knocked over. As they busied themselves killing the second goblin, it looked as if the young master was about to go and kill the third one. I was glad that he wasn't as timid as I first pegged him to be.

I slowly walked up next to him and said a few words.

This was all sales. Watch and learn. This is how you make tip money.

“Have you ever gone hunting before?”

“Me? No. This is my first.”

“And practice??”

“A few times at home...”

“And do you know the performance of the bow?”

“Yes.”

“Then there is nothing to worry too much about. It could never hurt a person so all you have to do is point and shoot in the goblin’s general direction.”

“Like, like this?”

Kim Youngchul pulled on the bow as he looked at me for approval.

“Do not look at me. Look at your target, that goblin over there. Match your bow. A little more to the right. A little to the left. A little down. Yes. Right there. Relax your shoulders and breathe in deep.”

“Huhb.”

“Now on the count of three...one..two..now!”

Ping! The arrow flew from the bow.

Keeeeeeekkkk!

“Nice shot!”

To think he really made his mark. I made a big deal of it by yelling hurrahs and clapping real loud. Kim Youngchul’s eyes were round saucerplates as he stared at the mark where his arrow had hit the goblin.

“Oh...I got it.”

“Congratulations on your first kill.”

“Thank you.”

“Ha ha. It is nothing. You can speak comfortably with me.”

“How could I? You are much older than I am.”

“It is usual for a hunter to speak comfortably or down to a porter. It is easier for me to hear as well.”

“Is that so sir? I mean...is that right?”

“See. There you go. It suits you just fine. You can just speak like that from now on.”

“Anyway, thanks. What’s your name again?”

“Jeon Sangmin, sir. Please call on me if you ever have another need.”

I said as I passed him my business card. He took it and read it in all seriousness before placing it in his pocket. I could already tell that the probability of him calling me on his next raid would be fairly high.

Kim Yeongchul spoke.

“But I hit it in the shoulder. Is that alright?”

“With that arrow, it’s game over no matter where you hit your target. Do not worry.”

After I quelled his worries, I turned to look in the direction of the felled goblins. Song Hansol was looking on with scorn while the other two were still prancing around their goblin and brandishing their weapons.

“Die! Die you bastard!”

“Ah. Shit. Damn. Shit. Damn. Shit. Why won’t it die?”

“That’s because you idiots have no skill. Retards.”

Song Hansol made a small smirk.

“Go to hell. It’s because we have crappy weapons ok? I guess I have to ask for a new weapon for my birthday.”

“It’s always the low level ones who blame it on their weapons. Look. Our Youngchul was able to kill his target in one shot.”

“Hey. Isn’t that weapon expensive as hell though?”

“But he did it from that distance. I bet you that you couldn’t do the same thing if your life depended on it.”

“I can too.”

“Yeah right.”

Clang!

While the two were arguing, the goblin had pushed a sword into into Park Jungbeh’s side. Luckily it lazily bounced off his armor. Park Jungbeh’s face turned bright red. He. Was. Furious!



“This piece of crap. How dare you leave a streak on my armor! Do you know how much this costs?”

“Can you just finish him off already so we can move on?”

Song Hansol's now blood-red sword finished sucking up the blood of its kill as he placed it back on his hip. I couldn't tell if he used a two sword fighting style, but he had another sword on the opposite hip.

The female porter hurried over with a handkerchief to clean the sweat off his brow. I guess she was used to doing this because she started cooing over him telling him how brave and strong he was while making the biggest smile she could muster. Song Hansol laughed aloud as he raised his hand to cup her at the waist.

The last goblin was finally slain and as they waited for the monster to evaporate, everything appeared at once. What was left behind from the monsters was 1 monazite. It was a poor hunt. To think that only 1 monazite would appear from killing three goblins. It was usual for 1 monazite to appear from killing two monsters...not three.

They had killed 30 monsters in total. It had taken them about 2 hours. This was a dungeon that didn't have any boss level monsters so as soon as you killed all the monsters in there, that was the end. The sun's rays began to filter into the cave and light it up.

Their total items included 10 monazites and 2 bastnazites. The total price of everything would come out to about 10,200 dollars. It seemed like there was a bit of bad luck on today's hunt since if they split it all up, it barely amounted to 300 dollars per person.

“Is this all?”

Mr. Jung asked with his voice tinged with obvious disappointment. It was understandable. Even at a level 1 dungeon, for there to be such little items, this could be seen as a really bad day.

Song Hansol glanced at his watch and said.

“It's only been about two hours so let's rest a bit. There's no reason for us to hurry. You. Porter. Why don't you take Youngchul and show him around a bit.”

“I'm fine.”

Kim Youngchul said.

“We don't know when we'll come again so make some memories. We were hunting this whole time so I'm sure you didn't get to have a good look at the place right?”

“Is, is that right?”

“Yeh. So just listen to what I’m saying. We’ll wait over here.”

“Alright. Then.”

Kim Youngchul stared at me with wide excited eyes. It seemed this kid was the type who couldn’t refuse anyone.

I nodded my head.

“I have things I need to carry so it is hard for me to leave this place.”

“You can just leave your things here.”

“All of these items are my responsibility. If even one item disappears...”

“This bastard. You’re saying some mighty annoying things! What are you saying? Are you saying that if you leave your things here that someone’s going to steal them? We’re the only ones here so you’re pretty much saying we’ll steal them aren’t you?!”

Song Hansol began screaming at the top of his lungs.

“That is not what I meant. I just meant in case...”

“Then what? Shit. If something disappears then I’ll make sure I

take the blame so go. No. Sooah. Why don't you hold on to everything. We have another porter here so give it to her."

"You can give it to me."

The girl porter came and stretched out an arm. I couldn't do anything but nod and hand it all over."

# Chapter 8

---

Thump. Thump.

I walked through the dungeon slowly with Kim Youngchul. The stalactites all along the cave walls were sparkling.

“How do you feel about your first time visiting a dungeon?”

“Scary. And cruel.”

“But it is something that is necessary as well.”

“I know. I know that if we don’t clear the dungeons once in a while the monsters would leave it and come to the outside world. How about you? Aren’t you scared? You’re not a hunter so you could die easily. If it were me, I would be too afraid to do it.”

“I am used to it so it’s alright.”

“Do you think I’ll be like that too?”

“Just think of it as preparing yourself early for something you will have to do later on anyway.”

“You mean military service?”

“Yes. If you become a hunter higher than a level 3 then by law you are to be drafted to the military.”

It was normal for hunters higher than level 3 to serve as National Security instead of serving at the military. This was to keep the cost of hiring hunters low while still maintaining the country's safety. It was a win win situation. While the hunter is placed in a comfortable station, they are asked to hunt once a week to keep the country safe.

“Well, if it's something I have to do anyway, isn't it the same if I just put it off for later?”

“I guess you can think of it that way too.”

I nodded my head. We walked for a long time without saying a word.

A negative thought kept niggling at the back of my mind.

“Is there something you're worried about?”

“More than something I'm worried about...there is something that concerns me a bit.”

“What is it?”

“Well I heard a bad rumor before coming in here, actually.”

“Rumor? About Hansol?”

“Well...no. Nevermind.”

I shook my head. Though I didn't know exactly what their relationship was, I couldn't go spewing nonsense I could regret later.

I couldn't hang myself over something that wasn't even confirmed.

Clang!

One minute Kim Youngchul was looking at my face carefully and the next he fell atop of me. Anyone could see that this was all a horrible act.

“Ahh!”

“...What are you doing?”

“Ow ow ow. I think I just sprained my leg and can no longer walk.”

“It looked as if you fell on purpose...”

“No no. I just twisted it.”

I calmly stared at him.

This little kid, was he doing this out of concern for me?”

“I swear!”

“Hm..well. I guess now that I look at it more carefully, it does look a bit swollen.”

“Yeah. So let’s go back alright?”

I smirked a little and crouched in front of him.

“Huh? What are you doing?”

This kid, I couldn’t tell if he was smart or dumb.



Taptaptaptap

I piggybacked Kim Youngchul and ran to the spot everyone was resting. It was already 20 minutes since we had left. If something had happened, it would've already been over before I could arrive.

I could hear a bunch of people screaming at the top of their lungs.

“You let go right now. I’m going to kill him!”

“Keu keu keu. Miss Porter. You’re much too strong no?”

“Shit. Look at her breasts.”

“Hey! Hold her properly! She keeps moving around!”

Ah shit. Shit. Shit. I thought it couldn’t be true but it was? Shit.

What I saw as soon as I arrived was Song Hansol sitting on top of the girl porter who was squirming with all her might on the ground. The two other hunters were on either side of her, holding her arms down while making piggy grunting noises. Mr. Jung was just in the corner observing everything while smoking a cigarette without a care in the world.

“What are you doing!”

I let Kim Youngchul on the ground before running toward the girl porter.

“Move!”

“Damn. This bastard. Ruining everything.”

Song Hansol got up. The other hunters moved away too.

Judging from the situation, luckily I wasn't too late.

“Are you alright?”

“..Do I look alright?”

The girl responded with a quavering voice. Her face was covered in fresh bruises. Her lip was busted and blood was freely trickling out.

I raised my head to stare daggers at Song Hansol.

“What is the meaning of this?”

Song Hansol was not looking at me. He looked at Kim Youngchul and said.

“Kim Youngchul. You piece of shit. Didn't I tell you to go around

the dungeon? It took you just 20 minutes to go around the whole dungeon? Huh?”

“I, I was going but I hurt my leg...”

“It looks fine to me.”

“Ah, it hurts. It’s swollen so I can’t even walk on it right.”

He responded over hiccups. It was obvious to anyone that he was lying. And quite horribly too.

“Ah. Whatever. Youngchul you go over there for a minute.”

“Why, why?”

“I said go!”

Song Hansol was almost screeching now. Kim Youngchul squirmed a bit before walking towards Mr. Jung.

“Mr. Jung take Youngchul and leave.”

“Yes. Understood.”

“I, I don’t want to go.”

“You want to die? What did I just say? You think I’m a chump?”

“No..that’s not it...”

“Then what?!”

Smack!

Song Hansol smacked the stalactites in front of him hard.

They came off in pieces almost as big as his arm and fell to the ground of the cave.

“Mr. Jung! Hurry up and take him and leave!”

“Ah, Yes. Yes sir.”

“And until I come out, don’t come in here.”

Mr. Jung took the resistant Youngchul and left the cave. I held the frightened girl and waited to see what would come next.

It wasn’t going to be good. If Kim Youngchul and Mr. Jung were gone, there was no one to stop this crazed maniac.

“Ha.”

Song Hansol gave a sigh as if he couldn't believe any of this was happening.

The other idiot hunters were scared too, judging from the situation, and kept their mouths shut.

Then finally Song Hansol spoke.

“You. Shit. You're interesting. You know that?”

Shling.

He had taken his sword out.

“Hey Jungbeh.”

“Yeah?”

“Have you ever killed a person before?”

“N...no...”

“Let's do it today.”

Song Hansol turned to see the two idiots' reactions before coming towards us. There was nowhere for us to go except closer to the wall behind us.

Shiiiiit! Is this bastard serious?!

Sparkle.

First things first, my eyes landed on the sparking golden bow as I searched around for a weapon of some kind. Kim Youngchul had left his Athena's bow in my backpack.

This thoughtful little kid.

Tap.

I hurriedly ran toward it and grabbed it.

“What?”

As soon as pulled on the string of the bow, an arrow appeared.

“I'm pretty sure you already know how powerful this bow is. If you don't want to get hurt, we should just drop the whole thing right now.”

“This bastard...if you don't want to die right now you'll drop that

bow.”

“I’m not an idiot.”

I swallowed my nonexistent spit and observed him to see what he would do next. Song Hansol was fast. If I took my eyes off him for even a second, I was a goner.

A small smile crept into the creep’s face.

“Yeh? But whatever shall we do? I’m not an idiot either.”

“What...?”

“That arrow. It doesn’t kill people. Did you think I wouldn’t know that?”

He knew it. Of course he knew. He was in the same party as the owner.

“So that’s all you know? You don’t know the rest then?”

“What do you mean?”

“You know how much this bow is worth right?”

“It’s worth more than you’ll ever see in your poverty-ridden

lifetime, that's for sure."

"What do you think will happen if I die?"

I pulled out a small dagger from my pocket and put it next to my neck. It was something I usually pack with me just in case.

"If you die in a dungeon then the item that you have...wait a minute. You're trying to hold that bow hostage?"

"Correctomundo. I know you could care less for my life, but this bow. If this bow disappears then it's a big deal right?"

Athena's bow was worth 20 million dollars. You wouldn't do anything rash just because you were mad and risk throwing away 20 million dollars...unless you were either crazy or retarded.

I prayed to the gods that he wasn't that crazy. Or stupid.

It was quiet. Park Jungebeh finally spoke.

"Hey. Let's drop it. Shit. There's no point in doing this here. We can beat the crap out of him outside or something."

"Yeh. There's no point in doing something and risk losing that bow. We're going to get our asses handed to us if we lose it."



“Shit! Shut up! Let me think.”

Tap.

Song Hansol tapped his finger before making a nasty smile.

I’m just saying, but that smile was the most disgusting looking one I’ve ever seen in all my life. No lie. I swear.

“What...?”

Tap!

That bastard moved so fast at that moment. I scooted back from surprise.

But his aim wasn’t to get me but to get the girl porter who was collapsed there on the ground.

“Ah ahhhk!”

“What are you doing? She has nothing to do with any of this!”

“Be quiet. Sooah. It’ll all be over soon.”

Song Hansol put his sword’s blade to her neck and started to tease.

“Heu, heuuk?”

“Now. Your life or her life. Which one?”

“...what?”

“Weren’t you going to commit suicide anyway? If you’re going to do it, then do the world a favor and do it.”

“This...bastard.”

There was about 5 meters of distance between Song Hansol and me. No matter how fast I moved, there was no way I could stop this psycho. No, I wouldn’t even be able to shake off these two morons on either side of me to begin with.

“Then. Just drop that bow and kill yourself. I’m telling you, now this is a fact, if you kill yourself while holding that bow I WILL kill her for sure. Ah Ah. Now what are you going to do? Hmm?”

“Don’t make me laugh. If this bow disappears, we both know you’re in for it. And if two porters die, you think it won’t bite you in the ass?”

“I’m sure it will. But so what? You think I’ll go to prison over it?”

“If two porters die, even if you are from money, you won’t get

away with it scot free.”

“It seems you don’t know how things work. This is a dungeon. No matter who dies, it’ll be hard to find out why. You could have died at the hands of a goblin. Who’s to say otherwise?”

“This piece of shit...”

“Keu Keu Keu. Cuss all you want. You won’t be able to cuss anymore in a short while.”

As soon as Song Hansol gestured with his chin, both gorillas started heading toward me.

Then everything went dark.

“What the hell?”

Song Hansol looked around in bewilderment. Ah. I know what happened. The dungeon had reset.

Wait. The dungeon reset? How is that possible? A dungeon can only reset when the entire party leaves.

Raaaaawwr.

A sudden roar rung out in the darkness. It was a sound I’d heard

before.

“Wait a minute...”

Thud!

On the opposite side of the cave was a huge monster thudding about. I could make it out from the torchlight. It was a big monster over 3 meters tall. It was a similar class as the monster we had met a few hours ago.

“What, what is that?”

“I don’t know. It can’t be a level 1 monster though right?”

Song Hansol was breathing shallowly from fear.

I couldn’t figure out how and why that monster appeared here. But I can’t say I hated it. I mean. Could it get any worse from here?

Creaak.

I pulled the bow. As soon as I did, a golden arrow appeared. Song Hansol stared at me with wide eyes.

Ha ha. I liked that look on him.

“No...no!”

“Yes. You shithead.”

Whing!

I shot the arrow.

# Chapter 9

---

Thud.

The arrow had hit the monster's shoulder. Athena's bow was a level 4 weapon. Though it's damage points were not high because it had the option of not hurting humans, it should have been enough to at least hurt that monster.

Ahhhhhhkk!

The monster whipped its head around in this direction. At the same instant I threw the bow to Park Jungbeh. And that moron caught it. It seemed he didn't have the balls to drop something worth 20 million dollars.

"What, what the hell? Shit!"

Keuuuuuuu....

The monster had its eyes fixed on Park Jungbeh. Not only was that arrow already shiny enough to draw attention, but having been hit by it...of course it would stare at the owner.

Holding the bow in his hands, Park Jungbeh seemed at a loss for what to do....then he started walking to Song Hansol.

"Han, Hansol? What do I do with this?"

“I, I don’t know. You bastard. Go away!”

Song Hansol glanced at the monster before slowly trying to get away. He probably knew. That that monster was not something he could handle with his level. Even with Mr. Jung and Youngchul combined, they probably wouldn’t be able to bring this beast down.

Rawwwwrrrr!

“Ahhhk!”

“Ah shit! Throw that shit to the ground and run!”

“Do you know how much this is?”

“Is it more important than your life? Just toss it!”

When the monster roared again, Song Hansol dashed away screaming at the top of his lungs. Park Jungbeh lost all his qualms about the expensive weapon and tossed it before running after his friend while also screaming aloud. But this was after the monster already fixed itself to Jungbeh.

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

“Ahhhhh! Shiiit! It’s following us!!”

“You psychos! Stop following me!”

“There’s no other way except here! You bastard! Trying to get away by yourself!”

The monster was catching up rapidly with its enormous legs and the three of them were running and cursing each other at the same time. Thanks guys. Thanks for leading the monster away from me without me having to ask.

“Haa haaa.”

Jung Sooah was shivering with fear on the floor where the idiots had dropped her before running. I grabbed the bow from the floor and hooked it over my shoulder. Then went to grab her hand and help her up.

“Get up. There’s no time to waste here. If those idiots get eaten, we’re next.”

“One moment...let me just pull myself together.”

She closed her eyes for a minute and took a few deep breaths before she slowly got up.

“Let’s go.”



“Are you alright?”

“I think I’m a bit better now. I hope those bastards become monster food and die.”

“Seems you recovered pretty fast.”

“Ha! I can still feel my heart racing like a jackhammer! I might have gotten a trauma from all this.”

“Might have?”

“Thanks to you I’m better than I might have been. Honestly, you were in more danger than I was.”

“I guess.”

I nodded my head. It was all pretty crazy now that I think about it.

“How can you be so calm?”

“I don’t know. I guess maybe because I’d been in plenty of life and death situations before?”

“Ah is that so? I guess a porter’s life is really dangerous. Ah ah. If I had known it would be like this, I wouldn’t have done it. Why did

I go through years of training for something like this? You know, I really tried hard to become a real porter?”

“One day all your hard work will pay off.”

“One day....sheesh. I hope so.”

She outstretched her arms for a moment before slowly walking ahead. It seemed she was physically trying to shrug off what had happened and I took comfort in her resilience.

“What are you doing? Aren’t you coming?”

As soon as we came out of the dungeon, we saw Youngchul and Mr. Jung waiting outside. I handed the bow over to the young lad and said.

“That piece of...Song Hansol...what happened to him?”

“I don’t know. The dungeon got dark out of nowhere so we ran out. Mr. Jung was just about to go back in but you guys came out.”

“What happened? What happened to the other young masters?”

“Who knows. Maybe they died. What does it have to do with me?”

How would I know. We didn't see them on the way out. Maybe they got eaten up. No. I hope they got eaten up.

Mr. Jung's eyes rolled back as he grabbed my collar.

"You. You killed them."

"I should have."

"What? This bastard...!"

"Stop it!"

Kim Youngchul came in between me and Mr. Jung. Mr. Jung couldn't do anything further but let go of my collar. Kim Youngchul spoke in my direction.

"I know you don't want to say it. But a person's life might be at stake. Can you please tell us what happened?"

"...while we were going at it, the dungeon got dark. At first, we thought the dungeon was reset but it wasn't. Instead a level 4 monster appeared out of nowhere. After that, I don't remember anything else honestly. I ran away with Sooah while I figured they came out safely before us since they had run off ahead."

"Is, is that true?"

Mr. Jung's expression was desperate. He was worried about his pay. If something had actually happened to Song Hansol then his life was probably over. In a way, you had to feel sorry for him too.

"In any case, did you report it?"

I asked Kim Youngchul.

"Yeah. They said they would arrive within 10 minutes so they should be here any moment now."

In a few minutes, a hunter wearing some expensive looking armor arrived. He was probably in his mid 30s.

"I received a call about an incident at a dungeon."

He spoke in Mr. Jung's direction. There were about 20 lookeloos and a bunch of civil servants running around as if they were chickens with their heads cut off.

"A level 4 monster has appeared inside."

"Please save our young masters. Please."

Mr. Jung and I had spoken out at the same time.

"Hm. Something like this happened here too? I will take care of it

so don't worry."

He spoke as he glanced at me.

"How did you know it was a level 4?"

"I had run into a similar monster recently."

"Hm..when?"

"About five hours ago."

"Is that so. Pretty impressive to see that you're still alive after running into a level 4 monster twice in one day. Oh yeah. I'm just saying this as a warning but it might be best if you didn't go into a dungeon for a while."

"Can I ask why?"

"Recently there have been a number of cases where monsters not within the dungeons' level have appeared. In just this country alone there have been about several hundred victims due to such cases."

"Oh my..."

"Something like this hasn't happened in decades. If this isn't an

isolated case and keeps happening, then dungeons will no longer be a place people can go.”

I frowned at his words. This would mean a stop to all the dungeon exploration. And my job as a porter would be at risk.

Only Song Hansol and Park Jungbeh made it out alive. The other hunter was found dead with only a partial body recovered. I had hoped that Song Hansol bastard would have died but he was pretty fast so I didn't expect it to happen that way.

Kim Youngchul told me he would be my witness so he told me to call if I needed him. But I knew what would happen. Song Hansol would probably hire an attorney for a crapload of money. Even if I took out all my savings, all I had was 80,000 dollars to my name. There was no way I could win a case against him. Even if I were to win, that would cause problems too. Who would use a porter that had won a case against a hunter? Jung Sooah probably thought the same.

But there was an even bigger issue.

All dungeon raids for leisure were paused due to this event until further notice. That meant I would have no means of income for over a month. I thought about going to a job market but tossed that idea. There wouldn't be a job suitable for a porter there.

“Whew.”

I blew out a sigh as I opened the drawer to my desk. I glanced at the skillbook. If I sold this, I would probably be ok.

A month ago, the day of the incident, I had put up the skillbook at the hunter market right away. But it didn't sell so I had to take it back down.

The price I had put it up for was 10,000 dollars. I had thought it was a pretty cheap price but there wasn't even one person willing to buy it. There were a few people who saw the level 0 and thought it was interesting. Some offered a few hundred dollars. I could have sold it for that much but I thought it was a waste especially for a skillbook. Even if it was only level 0, it WAS a skillbook after all.

On the other hand, they probably thought it was obvious to only sell it for a few hundred. Probably because most skillbooks weren't unique. There were usually a few of them laying around. For that reason, people usually knew what each skillbook could do. But this one. This one was one of a kind.

There was no way anyone would pay 10,000 dollars for a 0 level skillbook that no one even knew what it could do.

# Chapter 10

---

“Ha...what to do. There isn’t anyone who wants to buy it.”

I thought maybe I should lower the price some more. If I thought rationally, it made sense. There was a person who had offered 3,000 dollars. That’s a lot of money. But for a skillbook, it was much too low. If someone learned this skillbook and found out it had some amazing skill in it, then I would beat myself up too much.

Should I try selling it at 5,000 dollars? No I should get at least 6,000...

Ring~

A message came through on my cell. Because I had portered all throughout my school life, the only people who contacted me at this point was either my broker, family, or stupid telemarketers. There was a high probability that it would be a spam message.

-What are you doing?

Only this message appeared on my phone. What is this. Is this some new kind of spam?

A new number too. Who the hell texts a person who doesn’t have their number in this weird way?



A few minutes later the phone rang. It was the same number as the person who sent the message.

[Hello?]

“Who is this?”

[Ah. Do you remember me? Jung Sooh. The person who portered with you that last time.]

“Ah ah. It’s you.”

I had forgotten all about her. There was no time to think about her while I was running around doing this and that.

“Why are you calling?”

[Let’s meet.]

“What’s going on?”

[I can’t really say over the phone.]

“If you can’t say over the phone then it’s probably something you shouldn’t say in person either. Just tell me right now.”

I don’t know what she needed but I didn’t have the time to be on the phone with a girl like this. I had to get money somehow. That’s why I was at this damn market.

I was that desperate. Honestly, I didn’t even have the money to

pay for a cup of coffee.

Ring~

A picture message came through.

“Do you know how much the data cost for a picture message is?”

[Just look at it. I promise you won't regret it.]

What kind of picture is it that has her so confident? I was pretty curious now so I opened it. It was a picture of her holding a sword. I was about to think “what the hell” when I realized the sword she was holding was Song Hansol's bloody sword.

“What? Why are you holding that?”

[Are you curious?]

“Did you happen to pick up what he dropped? If that's the case then return it now! Or else you're going to get in big trouble later.”

It was a pretty big crime if a porter steals a hunter's item. Even if you are caught one time, your career as a porter is over. So I was certainly surprised that this chick was doing just that. And taking selfies too!

[Why would I do that? I stole this.]

“...I can't really say anything if you say it that confidently. So. Why are you showing me this?”

[Aren't you going to ask me how I stole it?]

“You probably stole it when he had it against your neck. He had a second sword of the same kind on his hip. I'm just impressed that you thought to steal it over all the chaos.”

[I didn't steal it on purpose. I was just desperate to come out of that situation alive so I...] ]

“Then you should have returned it after it was all over.”

[How would I return this? When my heart feels like it'll burst just from thinking of that bastard's face. And I won't even get paid for what I went through..I feel like this about covers it.]

“You want to end your career?”

[There hasn't been any work for the past month anyway. Isn't it the same for you?]

“Well..I mean...”

Jesus Christ lady. I'm about to kill myself over not having any money.

[So I was thinking. Do you, by any chance, want to buy this from me?]

“What? Are you asking me. To buy. Something stolen from you?”

[Come on. I asked around and it turns out that there's a bunch of this. Even if you went around with it, no one would know that it

was stolen. There's no way you'll get caught.]

This was....tempting. Very tempting.

Song Hansol was rescued from being chased by a monster. There was no way that he would even think that Jung Sooh had stolen his sword. He would probably just assume he had dropped it somewhere while he was running for his life. If a dungeon resets, all the items still in the dungeon would disappear too so he would most likely assume that it had disappeared in there.

'Almost' safe to assume. Pretty safe to assume. So tempting. Shit. But if I come right out and express an interest then it's obvious she's going to come out with some absurdly expensive price. It's better to kind of act uninterested in the first round.

"No. Even still...what use would a hunter level weapon even do for a porter?"

[Aren't you trying to be a hunter?]

"..How'd you know..?"

[I've been doing this for over a year now. I can tell just from looking at a person if they will always remain a porter til they die, or they are preparing themselves to become a hunter.]

"Whatever. That thing you have is at least 400,000 dollars. I don't have that kind of money. Jeez."

I made a little prayer. She responded as if she was waiting for me to say just that.

[Well. It is stolen, I guess. I'll sell it for cheap.]

“How much?”

[100,000.]

“Are you retarded? Does 100,000 dollars just grow out of your butt? You think it's that easy to come up with that much money?”

[I guess I thought you would have at least saved up that much. You're poorer than I thought...]

“There's a reason for everything.”

[Then I'll give it to you if you pay in installments.]

“Installments?”

[Yeah. Deposit of 50,000 dollars and then you can pay me 10,000 a month. At least until you pay me a total of 100,000 dollars]

“Too expensive. No no no. Let's just do 50,000 dollars flat. Aren't you coming to me as a last resort after trying to sell it somewhere else first?”

[I figured from before but you're pretty sharp.]

“Been a porter for 6 years now. You try doing it for that long and you'll be just like me. Anyway. What's your answer?”

[Deposit 50,000 and 3 monthly installments of 10,000 for 80,000 dollars total.]

This was obviously a steal. But that amount of money would clean me out completely. If I take this deal, I'd have to starve for the next month.

“Come on. I saved your damn life. Let's just do 50,000. Isn't that the least you can do for your savior?”

[Shit. I knew you would do this.]

She was quiet over the phone for a long time. It was definitely something for her to think about. Selling the bloody sword at 50,000 dollars was the same as asking me to sell my level 0 skillbook at 1,000 dollars. If it were me I would just hang up and say screw you. But to her, she had no use for a sword, so it might actually be not so bad a deal.

[Whew...alright. 50,000. But I want it cash then. If we go through a bank, it's going to be all sorts of annoying.]

There was no certainty that Song Hansol won't go looking for his bloodysword and maybe do a check up on her and me. So it did make sense for us to do it by cash. It was safer.

“Ok. I'll give you the cash as soon as you give me the weapon.”

As soon as I hung up I started jumping up and down in hurrahs. It's not that I don't know I won't be able to buy a skillbook once I use up 50,000 for this bloodysword. But the bloodysword is at the least a level 2 weapon. It was way better than a level 1 skillbook. If you just hit a level 1 monster with it, it was game over like that. Way better. Way way way. Right?

“Ha...to think....I'll only get 50,000...”

Jung Sooah made one sigh after another. I had met up with her at a nearby café to do our little exchange. She pushed a small bag toward me and I confirmed the bloodsword was in there.

“Be quiet. What if someone hears you?”

“There's no one here anyway.”

“That person working over there isn't a person?”

“Why would he care what we're talking about?”

“I guess you've never done a part time job before. Café workers usually have sharp ears. They love listening to what others are talking about.”

“I guess.”

She furtively glanced toward the worker before lowering her voice. Luckily he was roasting some beans and couldn't hear us.

“Now how about the money?”

“What. I need to confirm if this is the real deal.”

“How are you going to do that?”

“That. Well.”

I took the bloodysword out of the small bag and cut my finger with it. As soon as the blood touched the blade, it soaked it up like a sponge.

“Looks legit to me.”

“No trust. Where’s the trust.”

“This is 50,000 dollars. Of course I’m going to be thorough.”

Bam.

I dropped the backpack I had brought out on top of the table. This bag had 500 100 dollar bills. She looked into the bag and asked me.

“You’re sure this is the right amount?”

“I might lie but I would never scam someone.”

“Hm...I’ll trust you.”

“Hey, it seems as if they’re not going to let in any leisure parties



for a while so what are you planning to do?”

“I’ll probably apply to work for a general party. The real hunters.”

“It’s going to be super dangerous. You know, right?”

Just as the name implies, general parties are groups that do not go into dungeons for the fun of it. They go in for the sole purpose of attaining dropped items. These groups need porters as well to pick up and carry the items while they were busy with the monsters. Unfortunately, not only is the job extremely dangerous but the pay is also pretty crappy. To make things worse, you’re dealing with people who are constantly putting their lives in danger too so tips are not to be expected.

To put it into perspective, most of the porters who work in that area don’t have their licenses or any special training. This is to show you just how bad our situations have gotten that we’d have to resort to this kind of work.

“That’s why I need this money. I need it in case I get hurt.”

“Wouldn’t it just make more sense to wait it out until everything is back to normal?”

“I don’t know. I played around without working for a month. I feel like I’d go crazy if I had to stay jobless any longer.”

“I guess. And it’s not like things will get back to normal tomorrow either.”

Shrug.

She quietly passed me her business card. It was pink with the words, “Available 24 hours, please ask for the beautiful Jung Sooah” written across it. Just in case I flipped it over and saw a picture. Ha! What a con! This picture was pretty much photoshopped to death. I casually compared the girl to the one in the picture and made a small sigh before asking.

“Where is your conscience?”

“Money over conscience. Duh.”

# Chapter 11

---

Woompf.

As soon as I got back home, I laid on my bed and raised the bloodysword to look at it more carefully. It was called a sword, but it was only about 50cm long. Compared to a long sword, you had the ability to put more force into an attack and make faster consecutive stabs as well. The low damage it inflicts is easily balanced out by its blood drinking feature.

With just this weapon, it would be easy to clear a level 1 dungeon. No sweat. An armor would have been nice but that was impossible with the money I had left.

“Then...”

I got up from the bed and opened the drawer under the desk. Inside was the level 0 skillbook. Level 2 sword and a level 0 skill. This should be plenty to become a hunter. Luckily I didn't sell it.

Flip.

I flipped a page of the skillbook – the page that had the word ‘effort’ on it. The next page was filled with a bunch of words I couldn't make out. What the hell. Skillbooks are supposed to have pictures and words that are easy to decipher or draw meanings from. What the hell was this? I know I've never seen a skillbook with my own eyes before but this was a well known fact by everyone.

Weird. So weird. But I didn't stop. I kept reading...or trying to at least. Half of me thought there was something wrong with this and the other half kept expecting it to reveal something super awesome at some point. I decided to believe in the latter. Why not, right?

Paaaaaht!

A blinding light exploded out of the skillbook. As soon as the light appeared, all the numbers and words I couldn't decipher seemed to just pop right into my head.

My hunches rarely prove to be wrong. And I was now sure.

This. Was. The. Shit.

“Ha...”

When I opened my eyes, it was already night. I rubbed my them as I sat up. What had happened? When I looked at the clock, I saw that 6 hours had passed....and I was hungry as hell.

I shuffled my way to the fridge, opened the door, and quickly gulped down some milk by the carton.

“Pffft!”

And spit it out immediately.

“Did it expire?”

The expiration date should still be about two days from now...? I checked the date stamped on the carton, and indeed the date had not yet passed. No...even if the expiration date came, most milks didn't sour for a while still. I realized something was weird so I started examining everything else in the fridge. Everything looked like it had gone to shit. Moldy food, wilted vegetables, and the bananas that were yellow just yesterday were all brown.

I hurriedly grabbed my phone but the battery was dead. I ran to check what the date was on the internet.

The computer screen was telling me it was May 18th. I was sure today was May 8th.

Ten days passed...?

Wait. What the heck? Something was really wrong here. How can a person live after not drinking a sip of water for 10 whole days? There's no freaking way. Yeah, true, I have never experienced a hunger like this before in my life...but not enough that I feel I'm about to die.

First things firsts, I plugged my phone in to charge it back up. As soon as it turned back on, I saw there were a million messages and missed calls. Wow. This was the first time I'd ever seen so many messages on my phone.

The first messages were from Jung Sooah. I grabbed some things that looked still somewhat edible and started to stuff my face while going through them one by one.

-I was just texting to see if you got home ok.

-If you run into any problems, give me a call.

-Why aren't you responding? Did something happen?

-You're not ignoring me right?

-Is it because you don't want to waste your data? Can you please at least answer me?

-Hey. Isn't this too much? You could at least send a response.

-See if I ever contact you again.

-It's not because you were sleeping and didn't see this right?

-Are you ignoring me?

After this, it was all pretty much the same thing. At some point it got pretty ugly but it still felt a little nice that someone was concerned about me. Eh. Kind of scary too. I'll just ignore.

Most of the missed calls were also all Jung Sooah. There was a call from home so I called back to let them know everything was ok. They rarely called, if ever anyway, so it seemed they weren't overly concerned that I didn't respond for a few days.

There was also a missed call from my broker. Since he almost never contacts me unless it's about work, there was a high chance he was calling about a job. I called him.

Ring~

[Oy. Sangmin.]

“Hey. I got a missed call from you yesterday.”

[I was just about to call you again. Do you have any interest in joining a general party? There's a porter position open.]

“General party porter? I don't know about that.”

I didn't feel like doing it. Not only was it super dangerous, but the pay wasn't that great too. But more than that, I was determined to live a hunter life from now on.

[Hey. Can't do anything about it. These are the only openings there are these days. Who knows when they'll open the dungeons to leisure parties again.]

“I don't know about being a porter. But I might think about it if there's a hunter position.”

[What? You already saved up enough?]

“Ah. Well...something like that. I came up on a weapon. And a skill too.”

[What kind of skill?]

“Ha ha...the skill isn't all that great. But the weapon's a level 2.”

[Level 2? That should be at least a couple 100,000 dollars...did you...?]

“I bought it with the money I earned fair and square. Don't worry your little head and just find something for me.”

[Well. I'm sure you know what you're doing. In any case congrats. There's a 10 person party. If you join as a hunter level porter, I'm sure you can earn some good money.”]

“10 person party? Then the split wouldn't be worth it.”

[It's your first time. Start slow.]

“Alright. Then I'll take it.”

I took a deep breath after hanging up the phone. It was sinking in that I was on my way to becoming a hunter and it was making me anxious. Since it was a 10 person party, the pay would be on the small side but like my broker said...it was my first time. It isn't bad for a start.

The next thing I needed to do at this point was check the skill.



Come on baby. The feeling I had before passing out was gone now. Just what did it do?

“Hm...how am I supposed to do this?”

The problem was, I didn't know what the skill was or how to activate it. I guess since the name of it is 'effort', the common sense thing to do is to put an effort into doing something right? I decided to try doing some push ups.

When I was at about 200 hundred, my arms began to shake. But I'm a porter. I underwent training to enable me to carry around 200kg bags while running.

I completed an even 500 and fell to the floor.

“Huk. Huk. Shit. Feel like I'm going to die.”

I guess this isn't it.

In the end, I couldn't figure out how to activate this stupid skill and the day of the party was drawing ever nearer. General hunters normally don't hunt in the city but on the outskirts. This is because it is easier to make appointments in those dungeons. Additionally, the admission fees were cheaper to encourage hunters to come.

I was waiting in front of a restaurant in Kyongkido. If you walk about 2km then you can reach Baekoonsa. The dungeon we were

raiding was there. General parties had a different vibe from the Rich Kids' party that I was used to. They generally had low level armor and skills...and they weren't really too amazing at hunting.

As people started arriving one by one, I gave them each my business card. I made some business cards especially for today. It simply said, "Porter & Hunter Jeon Sangmin" across it. I wouldn't be working with the rich kid's leisure parties anymore so I didn't need to have that silly pretty boy moniker writing on it.

"I heard about you from broker Song. I'm Eum Hyunjoon. I am the party leader."

A guy in his mid-twenties opened his mouth after reading the card. He had short hair with a long scar on his cheek – honestly, that type of scar is so common that it didn't really make much of an impression on me.

"Yes. We'll trust in you."

Half of the people here were probably people who have never been on a raid before. Most of the decent skilled parties all know each other and already have arranged raids together. I knew before even coming here what kind of party I would be stuck with.

Of the 10 people in my party, 3 were short range attackers, 5 were long range attackers, and the rest were cover measures. What I mean by cover measures are people who can use confusion magic like Mr. Jung was able to do. One person could do slip and the other one could use stunning. Both skills required a long time to

activate so they could only use it once on a hunt. But you can't take that for granted because the one time you do use it could be the difference between a successful hunt and a failure. That is why there is always at least one of these in a party.

Everyone finally arrived so we began heading toward the dungeon.

“Hm. So does that mean you are a hunter with porter experience?”

The mid-forties looking man asked. I don't know if it was because of his fat face, but he had a permanent grumpy look.

“My name is Jeon Sangmin. And you are...?”

“Ah. I should at least introduce myself first.”

He then passed me his business card between his index and middle finger. When I checked it, I saw that he was the manager of the W company. The W company was one of Korea's leading businesses. When he saw the shocked look on my face, he started laughing before giving me a different business card.

“Ah. I am so sorry. That was an old card I used to use. Ha ha.”

He patted my shoulder, still laughing. He was acting as if I was his underling right now. Well whatever. It's not like I've never felt this before.

As I started thinking back, I thought I could remember having been in the same party as him once or twice before. He probably retired recently and started living this life as a hunter because he had nothing else better to do. If he had experience in raids and was a director at a big company like that, then there was a good chance that he was a decent hunter. And in these instances, their skill levels were usually high too. He could definitely be useful.

I expected him to be at least at Mr. Jung's level. We'll see.

# Chapter 12

---

Clap!

“Now. You all probably already know the basic rules. Distribution of the haul will be according to everyone’s contribution. And I will be the judge on that. We will also be paying Mr. Jeon Sangmin a separate additional fee of 100 dollars for acting as our group’s porter. If an item is dropped sometime during the raid, we will auction or sell it at the hunter market and share the earnings.”

As he said, determining each individual’s contribution was completely at the party head’s, Mr. Eum Hyunjoon’s, discretion.

Of course if there is a ridiculous ruling of contributions, then everyone would complain so it is normal for there to be some kind of input from the entire party as to how it should be divided.

“Um...what happens if an irregular appears?”

A girl hunter with short hair raised her hand. She wore glasses and was an archer but her bow was a level 1 standard weapon. It was a no-name brand generic bow so I didn’t think we could depend on it too much.

An irregular was a term for a monster that appears outside of its normal dungeon level – like if a level 2 or level 3 monster appears at a level 1 dungeon. Another instance of an irregular is when a boss appears in a dungeon that does not normally have a boss.

“Then...I guess you’d have to run for your life or die. Don’t worry too much. After that day, there wasn’t another incident for over a month.”

The glasses girl nodded her head at Eum Hyunjoon’s words. But I could see she was still scared. I pegged her as a beginner by habit. I’m not always right, but doing this and being cautious could be the difference between life and death.

Baekoonsa dungeon was far from civilization. And since the last irregular incident, the lack of hunters had led to a 30% discount off the usual admission price. It ended up being an almost 2,000 dollar discount so really...it was great for us.

Tap.

As soon as I stepped into the dungeon, I looked around to get a grasp of the place. The monsters may change after every reset, but the actual dungeon always remains the same. In the last 6 years’ worth of data that I had stored on dungeons I, of course, had the deets on this Baekoonsa one. The mental map of the place was in my head.

If you walked just 30 meters inside from the entrance, it went a bit downhill. And if you went a bit further down, you would come at a crossroads and meet your first monster. There would usually be about 3-4 monsters there but it shouldn’t be too much of a problem for our 10 person party.

Well...I thought it would be easy but a problem I didn't expect arose.

“Ahemm,...why isn't this working.”

The W Company manager kept moving his hand around in the air while clearing his throat uncomfortably. What the hell. This is the man who didn't even have any items on him but came here with his one sleep skill. And he already messed up on activating it twice already. Everytime he messed up, it took at least 5 minutes to try again so basically we were standing around like idiots for 10 minutes.

Then finally Eum Hyunjoon said.

“What is your skill mastery?”

“69%. Level 2 sleep.”

The manager responded with a slightly reddened face.

“If you're at that level then shouldn't a level 1 monster be easy for you to hold?”

“Yes, yes...so. This is all just bad luck really. Next time I'll do it right so don't worry.”

For every skill, it is measured by the level and proficiency.

Proficiency starts at 0 percent and the higher the percentage, the higher the success rate of that skill. Well, proficiency usually dictates just the success rate, but there are some skills that come with an added bonus feature too. These are called layer skills and are expensive. Very expensive.

The problem was that you could never know someone else's skill capacity except your own. Of course there is a separate skill that allows you to be able to gauge another person's skill. But it's rare to find a person willing to use up their one and only skill slot for this type of skill.

But then there are some raid teams who specially keep a spot on their group for a person with such a skill. Corporate raid teams, or pro raiding teams, usually do this.

“Alright.”

Eum Hyunjoon said unconvincingly. Finally on his third damn try, it worked. 5 small cave wolves. These were level 1 monsters that were pretty common in dungeons but they were huge – about 1 meter in height. Their usual attack method was biting. They usually roam around in packs of 5 as they were now so if there was no one to do a cover then they would be hard to deal with.

Of the five wolves, 3 fell asleep and 2 shook their heads struggling to stay awake. The higher the skill, the higher the success rate and these 2 obviously were successful in resisting it. He had said he was a level 2 sleep, but it was now obvious he was lying.



“I’ll attack first.”

Eum Hyunjoon held a shield in one hand and a mace in the other. Due to its versatility, tanker type hunters preferred blunt instruments to swords.

“Wahhhh!”

Eum Hyunjoon yelled out as he raced toward the monsters. He was doing this to get the attention of the wolves still awake. He raised the shield in front of him and had the mace raised high above his head. And I counted to ten quietly before running after him. At the same time, Eum Hyunjoon yelled out.

“Short range attack! Let’s move in!”

Bam!

Eum Hyunjoon smacked away the wolf running toward him with his shield and swung his mace toward the second wolf. In the time it took him to attack the two monsters, I pulled out my bloodysword to finish them off. Another hunter who had a motorcycle fullface helmet on, a longsword, and a bizarre outfit on had caught up next to Eum Hyunjoon. It seemed their movements had been planned ahead of time.

When I tried to kill the wolf from behind, I saw glasses girl pull her bow from far away.

I knew she would do this. Doesn't she know what a short range move is?

Ping!

Pat!

The arrow hit the ground right in front of my foot and kicked up dust everywhere. Luckily I noticed her and moved or else it would have hit me right in the leg. I glared at her and shook my hand. It was a sign for her to stop what she was doing. If there were a bunch of us in one spot like this in a fight, it was common sense to abstain from long range attacks unless the weapon had the option of not hurting humans.

There is no way she didn't know something as simple as that. She was probably anxious and did it without thinking it through.

The two wolves were growling at Eum Hyunjoon and helmet guy. Luckily they were both wearing neck protectors so they wouldn't die that easily. I headed toward them quietly and carefully.

Though they didn't turn to look at or acknowledge me, I was sure they knew where I was from my footsteps and smell. I don't have any stealth skills so there was no way I would be able to get to them without them noticing. But there was a good reason why I was still doing this even after knowing all of that.

“Haah!”

“Taah!”

As soon as I gave the signal, Eum Hyunjoon and helmet guy made aggressive noises and movements. Both wolves backed up in surprise in opposite directions, and I was standing right where one of them moved to.

There was no way it could avoid me at that point. I stabbed at it with my bloodysword before it could retreat away from me.

Stab!

The wolf seemed to twist in the air before it opened its jaw toward me right when I tried to stab it. The cave wolf’s sharp teeth caught the light from the torches and seemed to shine ominously.

I hurriedly drew back the sword and swiped it to the side.

Drops of blood splattered in the air as I felt a resistance, much like swiping at the bark of a tree bark, on the end of my fingertips.

“Not yet!”

I yelled out as I turned my head to where the wolf had landed. Its large jaws were aiming right for my neck as it ran in my direction. I rolled my shoulders as I readied my sword again.

Jab!

This time I got it for sure. I confirmed that the sword's tip had hit the wolf right on its jaw and pushed it in with all my strength.

Shhhhing!

Seconds after as it soaked up the wolf's blood, the blade of the bloodsword turned a bright red color. The downed wolf was trying to move its head even still so I aimed one more time.

“Pull out!”

I suddenly heard Eum Hyunjoon yelling out. I stopped mid-jab and I saw a bunch of arrows shooting in that direction.

Whip whipp whip!

Three bows hit their mark. One landed in front of my foot and the last bow hit the ceiling. I don't know who that was, but the asshole needs to learn how to shoot an arrow all the way back from the basics.

“It hit!”

Someone yelled out. The wolf that had been hit by the three arrows fell down in a bloody heap. The second wolf had its head

smashed in by Eum Hyunjoon's mace and died shortly after. The only ones left were the three wolves that were still asleep.

As Eum Hyunjoon readied his mace to kill the rest, I raised my hand up and said.

“Party head. Let me do it.”

# Chapter 13

---

Though Eum Hyunjoon's weapon was indeed strong, it would not be enough to kill a cave wolf in one hit. But the bloodysword I had in my hand was getting stronger with the blood it had soaked up earlier. It could easily kill the level 1 monster with one swing.

When I raised up the sword, red with blood, he glanced at it briefly before nodding his head. I walked up to the nearest wolf and stabbed into its neck.

Whing!

Ar!

I pushed back at the monster trying to move away and twisted my sword. I heard a squishing sound as blood started gushing out in torrents.

Soon after, I could feel the life disappearing at the tip of my fingers.

[+100]

A green number appeared above the head of the now dead wolf before it winked out again. What the hell? I went to the second wolf and sliced its neck too. The same number appeared and disappeared again. And it happened a third time after I killed the third wolf.

What appeared after killing all five wolves were 2 monazites and 1 coltan. When you refined a coltan, it became tantalum – something used to make a smartphone battery. This was the reason for the expensive new phones. And this was exactly why I keep my old 2G phone. Why do I need something that was double the cost of what I have now?

“Ms. Bae Yeongyoung. Did you not hear my instructions?”

Eum Hyunjoon walked towards glasses girl and asked. Honestly, it could have been a fatal mistake. If I hadn't been aware of my surroundings and noticed her, I could have ended up wounded or dead before the real hunt had even begun.

“I'm sorry.”

“It's not a problem if you aren't skilled or have expertise. There is always someone like that in any party. This is why even if you cannot join in the hunt or kill, we still give everyone a share of the earnings. So please abstain from overstepping what you are able to do. And you shouldn't be apologizing to me but to that gentleman.”

As Eum Hyunjoon pointed to me, glasses girl walked up to me and bowed. She really did look terribly sorry.

“Um...I'm really sorry. I was so anxious I forgot his instructions. I thought that I needed to help in some way and made a terrible error in judgment.”

“Anyone can make a mistake. Let’s just forget about it.”

Glasses girl opened her eyes wide and said.

“Uh...you’re not mad?”

“Just try to do better from now on.”

“I...guess...”

“If you don’t have anything else to say, you can stand back up. You don’t have to keep bowing.”

Since she was bowed to me, I could see that she was at least a D cup inside her armor. Wow. And she has glasses too. This could quite possibly be the worst combinations for an archer.

If I were completely honest, I wasn’t really that mad. I had already anticipated something like this to happen and it resulted in nothing bad anyway. On top of that, it’s not like getting mad is going to improve her skill in any way so what was the point? There was no reason for me to overreact over someone else’s mistake.

Eum Hyunjoon stared at me strangely.

I don’t like getting that kind of look from a guy. Bleh.



“Then should be continue?”

Anyway, what was the meaning of those numbers?

I recalled the green digits as I packed the ores into the backpack and continued on our raid with the party. It was obvious it had something to do with the effort skill. I’m not an idiot. That’s not what I meant. What I was wondering was what those numbers signified.

Ok let’s think this through. When we killed the first wolf, a number didn’t show up. Same thing with the second one. The number only started appearing after killing the third wolf. The only difference was that I had personally killed the third, fourth, and fifth wolf. Maybe I earned something for killing a monster.

Hm. That’s awesome. But what’s the reward? What can I do with that number?

If you want to know your own skill level and proficiency, it’s a fairly easy thing to find out. You close your right eye and try to use your skill. If you do that, two numbers will appear where it was dark moments before: Your Level, and Your Proficiency. If you have a passive skill, all you have to do is just close your right eye. Because a passive skill is always active.

But my case was different. In the past few days, I haven’t been able to see any number at all. This time I said, ‘what the hell’ and tried closing my left eye. [0,1,300] appeared. Ha. That would probably be [Level, Proficiency, Reward] In that order.

“Hmmm...”

This was so weird. All this time I had to close my left eye?

“Um...hello?”

Glasses girl tapped my shoulder. When I didn't answer, she shook me a bit.

“Wi...wink...you were winking.”

“I was trying to find out my skill level.”

“Ah. That was what I figured.”

“Yes.”

“It's true.”

“Well I didn't say it wasn't”

“Right.”

Glasses girl kept answering me with this nonsense before she fell forward suddenly. What's with tripping over your own foot?

We paused for a bit to let her get back up before we continued on. There were traps that would appear at times, so we had to move cautiously. Detection skills were always useful to have but there is rarely anyone who would learn a skill that didn't help particularly in a fight. I kept looking around with my eyes while my mind continued to race in thought.

How am I supposed to use those reward points? Was it like money? Can I use this to raise my skill or strength? Or....could they just be meaningless numbers to make me feel good about myself?

Well. I guess at this point anything could be possible.

Squeeze.

Just when we were exiting one tunnel, Eum Hyunjoon raised his hand over his head and made a fist. I walked up next to him and quietly looked in the direction he was pointing at with his chin.

8 cave wolves and 1 goblin.

Though we were 10 in our party, if I were to honestly assess our skill, we were way weaker than them. In cases such as this, we couldn't do anything but take the risk.

“Isn't it better to pass?”

The manager mouthed silently. He had a worried expression on his face. It was obvious he was worried his lacking sleep skill wouldn't work properly this time around either. Eum Hyunjoon thought for a second before shaking his head.

“If we pass here, we have to pass on this entire tunnel. That means over half our earnings would go up in smoke.”

“What if we get hurt...”

“There is no such thing as a safe dungeon.”

Eum Hyunjoon replied in a short tone. The Manager, who was used to hunting in leisure parties, wasn't used to being put in any unnecessary danger. But that was too bad. Because this was a general party. Tough luck, guy. In the large area, 8 cave wolves were slinking around. And in the center, the goblin was sleeping in the torchlight.

Sleep would work even more easily on a fella that is already sleeping. I figured it would only be a doable fight if at least 5 monsters, including the goblin, were to be ensnared in the sleep skill.

“If there are this many, the sleep doesn't work as well.”

The manager kept muttering about as he walked forward. He crouched behind a boulder that was not in the wolves' view and raised his hand. A golden light shined out from his palm and

settled down over the enemy like a fog.

The goblin and 3 wolves fell into a deep sleep. There were now 5 wolves to deal with. But that was just too much for us. Eum Hyunjoon's face went dark.

“I don't know about this...”

The sleep was successful but it seemed it wasn't too effective because the wolves were starting to stir. I tapped his shoulder and said.

“How about we distract them and take at least one of them out first with a bow?”

“You think that'll work?”

“We won't know until we try. If we kill at least one in the beginning, I'm sure we can take care of the rest one way or another.”

“I guess if it's four then it'll still be hard but not impossible. But what can we use as a distraction?”

“I have beef jerky that I packed as an emergency snack.”

I pulled a couple out from my backpack and showed it to Eum Hyunjoon who nodded his head. I took the jerky and threw it to

the nearest world.

Sniff Sniff.

It looked at the jerky and started smelling it. It seemed to be suspicious at first but it soon grabbed it with its forepaws and started ripping into it.

While it was distracted, I threw some more toward it to lure it closer to where we were.

It started padding its way closer and closer to us. Eum Hyunjoon made some hand gestures the long range attackers. All the long range attackers in our party were archers. Two crossbows and three regular bows. The damage for the crossbow was higher but the speed of the regular bow was much quicker.

The two crossbow attackers who had already preloaded their weapons walked to the wolf and shot their arrows.

Pat!

Kaeaeng!

The cave wolf whimpered out as the bows pierced its body. It had hit its chin so it wasn't a fatal shot. But because it was a crossbow, the wolf was having a difficult time trying to move its body. Even if it were to try to heal, it would take some time.

“Arr!”

The wolves who had heard the attack raised their heads and looked toward us.

Three bows were launched and flew where they were growling.

# Chapter 14

---

Snap!

Arr!

Two more arrows flew into the air and one hit its mark.

The wolves racing toward us were reduced to just 3. The one that had been hit in its shoulder lay on the ground whimpering.

Ping!

One more arrow flew out. When I turned back, I saw that while the two archers were reloading their weapon glasses girl had quickly shot out an arrow. Did she abandon accuracy for speed?

Right before they were on us, a three footed arrow flew out.

Kaeeng!

One wolf was shot through the head and shoulder this time. Two left.

“Come at me!”

Eum Hyunjoon yelled out while pounding his chest and jumping



to the front. Helmet guy pulled out his sword and went forward as well.

I just stuck to Eum Hyunjoon's rear. I didn't have hunter level armor so I needed to be careful. I planned to make my move while Eum Hyunjoon had their attention.

“Keep your distance!”

Eum Hyunjoon yelled out this time. Understanding his meaning, helmet and I immediately jumped next to him to flank both his sides. We stood about 3 steps apart from one another. This was the perfect distance for the archers to still make their attack but not enough where the wolves could pass through us.

The wolves jumped at Eum Hyunjoon before being knocked back by his shield. It seemed that while one wolf was aiming for his neck, the other focused on aiming at his body.

Eum Hyunjoon lowered into an almost crouch to minimize his exposure to their teeth. He covered his lower body with his shield and protected his upper body with his mace.

The two crossbow wielders finished loading their weapons and let fly their arrows. The arrows had hit their mark. The 30 cm bolt had imbedded themselves deeply into the monsters. They began to throw up blood as they tried to retreat but got caught in the three wolves that had been hit before.

One of them jumped up to bite Eum Hyunjoon's shoulder. And the other chomped down on his leg, while still the third wolf ran to bit at his head.

“Mr. Eum!”

Helmet guy yelled out as he slashed out with his sword.

A white glow emerged from the sword. It seemed he had activated a skill. I pulled out my bloodysword to swipe at the wolf on his shoulder.

I could hear the sound as my sword stabbed into one wolf's butt. And the second sound was helmet guy cutting into another wolf's waist.

The wolves cried out and let go of Mr. Eum. Now that he was free to move, he slammed down at the third wolf's head with his shield. The wolf snarled out as he let go as well. Eum Hyunjoon yelled out once again.

“Stun!”

A hunter in training gear who had been standing back with the archers stomped heavily with his feet.

The ground began to shake loudly and a shockwave shook the area where the wolves were. They collapsed where they stood and rolled around as the ground kept shaking uncontrollably.

One wolf tumbled in my direction. I used all my strength to stab down at the wolf and twisted my sword. I could see the wound appear immediately and the blood spewing out soon after.

As the wolf tried to struggle, I stomped down on its head and yelled.

“Stay still you bastard!”

It’s insides spilled out with the blood this time.

[+100]

As soon as I saw the green digits appear again, I headed towards my next objective. The stun time was a total of 10 seconds. My bloodysword was still only half red. It needed more blood.

I didn’t hesitate as I sliced through the second wolf’s neck. Another sprout of blood, and then I heard the screaming of a goblin behind me.

“Kyaaaaa!!!”

The sleep had completely come undone.

This goblin had the special ability of being able to command the wolves. Wolves who are under the goblin’s command do not feel fear or dread death. This made them several hundred times harder

to fight.

I had killed two wolves and helmet and Mr. Eum had killed two wolves. The last wolf was running toward Eun Hyunjoon and helmet was too far away to be of any help to me.

Now the three sleeping wolves had awoken and dashed towards me. Shit. What. The. Hell. Their lengths were almost as long as I was tall, and seeing them running at me made me almost want to shit my pants.

Ping! Some arrow flew out and barely missed me.

Thought the arrows kept flying at them, they never hesitated or slowed down.

Should I run?

For some reason, I felt like I could do something...

“Run! You crazy man!”

I jumped out of the way after hearing the manager’s shouting. The wolf bit at the air.

“Why is this psycho jumping in this direction...”

I could see the manager. I had instinctively jumped where I heard the voice. I landed behind the boulder he was hiding at.

The wolves padded toward us while growling menacingly. Each of the three wolves were as big as I was. Strength, speed, reflexes... they were all better than mine.

There was no hope.

Just then a shower of arrows landed where the wolves stood. One wolf evaded the arrows and headed towards the archers.

There was no time to think. I threw the bloodysword I had been holding.

Well what do you know. It landed right on the butt of one wolf. And right after, another flurry of arrows

flew out – one of it piercing that wolf right in its eye.

“That’s it!”

“What do you mean that’s it! How can you throw away your weapon like that!”

The manager yelled out in aggravation. The last two wolves again started running towards us.

Helmet had finally arrived to help and bumped into the racing wolves.

“Are you ok?”

Shit. Why are you the one stealing all the glory and being cool!

It wasn't over yet. But it would take too long for me to try and retrieve my bloodysword. I looked around to see if there was anything else I could use as a weapon. I looked at the boulder the manager had been hiding behind. It looked like it would weigh about 300 kg.

I pushed the manager aside and grabbed onto the bottom part of the boulder.

“Ahhhh!”

The boulder moved a bit but that was it.

“Are you crazy? What the hell are you doing?!”

The manager was looking like he might just flip any second now. I guess it was pretty crazy.

But...I mean.

It felt like it would work.

“Ahhhh!”

I heard a weird sound coming from my back. Wait. Did I break something?

And in that instant, I picked up the enormous boulder.

# Chapter 15

---

“Huh...?”

The manager looked at me incredulously. I yelled in helmet guys' direction as I threw the boulder.

“Duck!”

Woosh!

Helmet crouched down without even looking back. The boulder just barely passed over his head and landed on the two wolves in front of him.

Crash!

One wolf had its head crushed under the boulder while the other wolf had its crumpled under it. It was trapped.

“Wait! I will kill it!”

I yelled at helmet guy and ran to pick up my sword. As soon as I killed it, the familiar green number appeared.

Opposite of us, I saw Eum Hyunjoon killing the third wolf. The only monster left now was the goblin.



“Kwachi! Twak!”

“What the hell is that thing saying now?”

The manager asked.

“He’s probably asking us to spare his life.”

I held my sword and slowly approached it. In its hand was a short whip – hardly something you could call a weapon. Seeing that he was a wolf trainer, he looked less dangerous than the usual breed.

As we started walking closer to it, it slowly began backing up before it finally was up against the cave wall.

“I will do it.”

“You don’t have to. If you’re trying so hard because of the contribution thing then you don’t have to worry. You’ve done more than enough.”

I shook my head at Eum Hyunjoon’s words.

“It’s not because of the contribution. I want to do it before the buff on the sword disappears.”

“Ahhhh!”

The bloodysword easily pierced through the goblin’s leathery hide and cut its inside.

[+150]

I guess they give a bit more for this guy.

\*\*

As we waited for the monster to disappear, everyone took a break. I also sat down to rest on top of my backpack and closed my left eye.

[0,2,350]

Hey wait. Shouldn’t it be 850? Why is there 500 less than there should be. Ah. That’s right. It’s obvious where it went. I stood up and picked up my heavy backpack with one hand.

The 50kg backpack felt very easy and light to pick up.

“So that’s it...”

I was stronger. I’d have to experiment a bit later on to figure out just how much strength uses up how many points but...it feels like

I'm at least 50 percent stronger. Was this a permanent buff or a temporary buff? I couldn't be sure. But if this was permanent.

My heart began to race. This could be an even crazier skill than I could have ever hoped for!

“Isn't that heavy?”

I had been lost in thought before the glasses girl interrupted me. I pushed the bag toward her.

“Want to try holding it?”

“No. I can tell just by looking at that thing that it's real heavy.”

“Probably about 50kg.”

“Don't lie. That means it's heavier than me?”

“Uh...a porter can measure a person's weight almost exactly just by looking.”

“So?”

“From Miss Bae Yeonkyoung's height and body, your muscle structure...I can tell you are not lighter than this backpack. You're probably around fifty...”

“Ahhh! Ok stop!”

Glasses girl began waving her arms about to shut me up.

“...Sure.”

I didn't want to embarrass her so I closed my mouth.

Glasses girl then took a deep breath and said.

“Truthfully, there was something I wanted to ask you.”

“Ask away.”

“Do you know how to use a bow and arrow?”

“Why would you think that?”

“From the way you evaded the first arrow I shot out. No, you didn't even evade it. It was as if you knew that the arrow would land right there. It wasn't even as if the speed of the arrow was slow or anything. If you knew that much, then it would mean you've probably handled this type of weapon before.”

“I learned a bit for fun in college.”

“I knew it! I knew it!”

“But why did you want to know?”

She hesitated for a moment before sighing again and asking.

“Well...I’ve never had any proper training on how to use a bow before. So even though I practice a lot, I never really seem to improve.”

“If that’s the case then it would be better for you to ask the other archers.”

“I already asked them but they all said they learned it from purchasing a skill.”

“Hm. Then there’s nothing you can do.”

Purchasing a skill meant you automatically absorbed the ability to do something without ever really training your body to learn the actual task/skill. So there was no way they could teach someone else. It would be like a person trying to teach someone else how to breath – it comes so naturally...how would you explain it probably into words?

Glasses girl stared at me with wide and hopeful eyes.

There was one advice I could give.

“Shoot slowly.”

“What?”

“Because you keep trying to shoot quickly even when your skill isn’t up to par, your accuracy never improves. Just think of it as having only one shot in a hunt and shoot with care....slowly.”

“But...”

“Do you remember what the party head said?”

“Yes. Don’t think of the contribution...”

Glasses girl had a very sad look on her face. She wasn’t able to shoot very well at all today. She probably shot out about 10 arrows but missed almost every time. This could only be a psychological problem.

“Because your accuracy is so low, you’re too afraid of failing again and you end up hurting your performance.”

“I see...”

Glasses girl nodded her head. It is common for a person experiencing an issue to not realize the remedy, even though it may be staring them in the face, until pointed out by an outsider.

This was such a case.

“Thank you for the advice. I’ll buy you food later.”

“It’s fine.”

“..You don’t want to eat food I buy you?”

How many people you think are on this earth you can say no in this kind of situation. I reluctantly agreed to let her buy me food. Glasses girl made a little hurrah with her fist, bowed quickly, and walked away.

“What does she see in the crazy bastard? Lord knows...”

The manager started muttering to himself. I shrugged my shoulders. Whatever.

“Good job everyone.”

As soon as we cleared the dungeon, the sunlight began streaming into the cave. The increase in strength was still there. It was still early because we didn’t leave the dungeon yet, but it’s been active for nearly three hours...very encouraging.

After calculating everything, today’s entire earnings were only 20,000 dollars. There was an area you could auction off the ores as soon as you left the dungeon so we could do the splits immediately.

But that wasn't all I got out of today. I also got some more of those reward points. I pretty much tried to rack them up every chance I got.

1350 points.

I was planning to do some tests with this. There was no way that the effort skill would be limited to just strength. If that was the case, the skill would have been called power up...or strength up...or whatever.

After we all took a bit of a break, we went to do the contribution split. As expected, the one who got the most was Eum Hyunjoon. The one who came in second was the manager guy.

“Wait. Mr. Kim Soongeun got second?”

Someone asked. He was one of the crossbow guys who really came in handy that day. I didn't disagree with what he was asking. The contributions should be split based on results and not just the level of someone's skill.

“Do you disagree?”

“Well...he messed up on the sleep magic a bunch of times and all he did was hide and complain during the actual fight.”

“What? When did I ever complain?”



Manager man stood up from his seat, super red in the face. He looked like he was just about ready to strangle someone. Eum Hyunjoon placated the angry man and had him take a seat before speaking carefully.

“That is true. I cannot disagree. But it is also true that his sleep magic was the most helpful during our raid. If it weren’t for him today, we wouldn’t have been able to clear over half of the dungeon today.”

“But it’s still hard for us to acknowledge him as number two. I would much prefer it if we named this man as number two for today.”

He pointed to me as he spoke.

“I don’t mind. Though the manager was a bit rough around the edges, he was quite helpful in today’s raid.”

I shook my head as I responded to the indirect compliment. I did understand where Eum Hyunjoon was coming from, but mainly I wanted to support him.

As soon as I supported the manager as second, everyone else seemed to put away their reservations. The manager glanced my way for a second but whipped his head away when we locked eyes.

“Ok. Then is there anyone else who objects to this order?”

No one else answered. I was placed third, helmet man got fourth, and as predicted...glasses girl got last place. Since those who were most at risk or put themselves in danger to complete the raid were usually ranked higher, it was normal for there to be more short-range or close combat attackers at the top. The manager was the exception. But this was also normal because those who knew how to do sleep or confusion magic were considered very valuable in a level 1 dungeon. So there you have it.

# Chapter 16

---

After we finished the contribution split, my final pay came out to a total of 1,510 dollars. After taxes and stuff, it did go down a bit but compared to my porter days...this was easily several times more than what I used to earn. I went confirmed that it went into my account and we all headed to a small restaurant.

After we all had dinner and we all started to drink a bit, Eum Hyunjoon called me outside.

“You did well. This is your porter fee.”

He said to me as he pushed a thick envelope in my direction. I had been wondering when I would get this.

When I checked inside, I saw there was 500 dollars.

“...This is a bit much.”

“That means you were just that valuable.”

“Even still, 500 is...did you by any chance take from some of your contribution money to pay me this?”

Eum Hyunjoon had taken 30% of the contribution fee. That means he had taken about 6,000 for himself. There were some grumblings from everyone but no one said anything because they

did acknowledge that he did a good job as the party head.

“Ho ho. You’re pretty sharp, aren’t you?”

“Well, I did think that you took a pretty big percentage for yourself. But I didn’t even suspect that you were doing it to pay me this much in porter fee.”

“I did it to cater to manager Kim’s pride. I knew he would say something when we were doing the contribution split. I wanted to avoid any unnecessary confrontation.”

“Is he someone you know?”

“Not personally, but I we needed a mage pretty quickly and I met him through an introduction. He’s someone who would create trouble if we don’t do things the way he likes it. I heard some rumors. But he was a last resort so we had to use him.”

“So that’s why you ranked him as number two.”

“You know this is all hush hush right?”

“Of course. Thank you. But what are we going to do about everyone else then?”

“I took care of them all. Don’t worry.”

Eum Hyunjoon laughed as he lightly patted my back. Manager Kim was wasted and bragging about his sleep skill the whole time and didn't even know this was happening right under his nose. In that time, Eun Hyunjoon called everyone one by one and gave them a little more of the contribution fee.

Thanks to Eum Hyunjoon's quick-thinking and consideration, the night ended on a light note. Everyone received more than they expected and general Kim was pretty happy at being ranked at number two. I was actually curious about how he would have reacted if he only knew that he was almost neck and neck with glasses girl for last place.

\*\*\*

The day after the raid. As soon as I woke up, I headed on over to the neighborhood gym. This is somewhere I go everyday to train, but I was going there for a different reason today.

The gym was packed with housewives. Because it was in a residential neighborhood and had a swimming pool as well, it had somehow become a meeting place for married women. I greeted a trainer with my chin before making a beeline to the dumbbells.

I started off with a dumbbell weighing 30kb.

Light. He he. So light.

The extra strength was still active even after a full day had

passed. I put the dumbbell back down and picked up the heaviest one at this gym – a 40kg dumbbell.

This was light too. I started doing some reps. I would usually have a difficult time with a weight this heavy but I breezed through 3 sets and still had energy to spare.

The trainer was watching me with arms crossed behind me. We were at least on a “hello” basis since I’ve been coming here for a few years. Though his arms were way bigger than mine, he was pretty much only able to do about 3 sets of 35 kg weights.

He stared at me for a bit longer before saying.

“Aren’t you trying to do too much?”

“I guess I’m in good condition today. Do you have anything a bit heavier?”

“You don’t want to get hurt.”

“Ha ha. You know what I do for a living.”

People who work out a lot are overly cautious about not getting injured. But porters are even more careful.

“Are you using drugs or something?”

“No, nothing like that.”

The trainer shrugged his shoulders and pointed to an iron bar. I guess he was telling me there wasn't any heavier dumbbells so I should use weights instead.

I popped in 50kg weights on both sides. Including the weight of the bar, it was 110kg. I held it with both hands and raised it up. It was a bit hard but it was just heavy enough to exercise the muscles.

I didn't plan on trying to get stronger right now so I just did a few more reps and lowered the bar. When I got up to leave, I saw another man come in and groan while trying to pick up the same bar. I couldn't help but let out a small snicker.

I went through a few more machines to gauge my strength level before hitting the treadmill. I wanted to test my endurance this time.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

I put in 18km and started running. After running for an hour, I finally came to a point when it felt like I was about to die.

But even an hour was a record for me. I would usually only be able to do about 30 minutes normally. But even the sweat that had been pouring out like rain stopped at some point. It was usually dangerous to work out to this degree. Not only does it throw off your balance for the workout, but it could also cause some long

term damages to your body.

Haa. haa. Haa. haa.

My breathing rung out loudly throughout the whole gym. Even those who usually kept attention to their own workout had begun sneaking glances at me every so often.

“Why is that guy working out so crazy today?”

“I dont know. Maybe he’s training to do a marathon...?”

I’m about to die. I had become fixated on the stop button for a while now. I wanted to press it so bad right this second.

But if I stop right now, I have to start from the beginning all over again. Hell no. Not doing it.

“Ahhhh!”

I let out a yell to hype myself up so I can keep doing this. The old ladies behind me gasped in surprise and began fanning themselves. This wasn’t really something I should be doing in the neighborhood gym but ...whatever.

Shit. This was hard. I feel like I could pass out any second now. Then out of nowhere, I felt like my chest was expanding.



Paa!

A feeling like a huge flow of oxygen running into my lungs overwhelmed me and running became easier. I hurriedly closed my left eye.

[0,3,850]

500 points had been deducted. My endurance had gone up.

“Hoo. Hoo.”

I slowly regained my breathing and ran faster. I was able to run for 30 more minutes. 😊

\*\*\*

“Are you going to run a triathalon?”

Ha.

I was sitting inside a convenience store sharing a cold drink with the trainer.

“No. I just wanted to check something.”

“I thought you said you were a porter...I thought things were

tough in the job area for you guys these days.”

“Yeah. How did you know?”

“The news is always talking about it. That there were some weird happenings at the dungeons.”

“Ha. It seems it’s still a somewhat newsworthy topic even after a month has passed.”

“Well because there were so many casualties. And there are still a lot of families suing the government demanding reparations and payouts. You know that most of the victims were from rich families so they’re probably asking for a lot of money.”

I think I’d read something like that somewhere before too.

“Honestly it was the government that promoted leisure parties to begin with so...they can’t really say it wasn’t their fault.

“Well I heard that the government eventually put up a white flag and they’re now in negotiations.”

“How about the insurance agencies? Aren’t they in trouble too?”

“Yep. Basically all the stocks for the insurance companies with any raid related products have been plummeting. It’s just bad for everyone all around right now. I heard there were a bunch of

companies that just went under. It's really affecting the economy. And because we basically lost our main supply for rare ores, all the electronics have been coming from China and is getting difficult to procure."

"You seem to know a lot."

When I stared at him in surprise, he started laughing.

"I have a lot of interest in things like this. Being a hunter was also a dream of mine one time."

"So that's why you started exercising."

"Yeah. But it was too high of a goal for me to reach. I never knew that hunter gear was that expensive."

"Ha ha...that is true."

Even now every elementary kid's dream occupation is a hunter. That was how popular and well-paying it was. Famous hunters appear on tv quite often. And hunters with double slot skills were pretty much top celebrities.

# Chapter 17

---

But as they grow up and learn about how real life works, they end up giving up on their dreams.

If you want to clear a level 1 dungeon safely, you needed a level 2 skill and equipment. If you wanted to clear a level 2 dungeon safely, you needed a level 3 skill and equipment. This made it impossible to make your way up from the bottom because getting the level higher skill and equipment was nearly impossible without the money.

So the average person can only enter a dungeon with subpar skill or level. Which made any raid a very dangerous thing for most people. Case in point yesterday. If we didn't have manager Kim's sleep magic, even with Eum Hyunjoon's tanking and my attack skills, we would not have been able to clear the dungeon.

Risking that kind of danger paid out a mere 20,000 dollars. It wasn't a cheap amount but it wasn't a lot either. Especially if you were potentially trading it for your life. You had to clear a dungeon in this manner a bunch of times to earn enough money to procure level 1 gear. If you were lucky enough you would still be alive to do the same thing to save enough for level 2 gear.

Do you understand now? No matter how hard you try, even if you tried all your life, passing level 3 for a normal person was a near impossibility.

“Then I think I'll take my leave now.”

I finished whatever I needed to do at the gym. I knew where I would spend the rest of the points I had left. Now that I improved my strength and endurance, I needed to up my reflexes. I didn't have any quality armor so I needed to be able to evade attacks.

This wasn't something I could do by myself. I took out my phone and went through my contacts. No one. I had no one.

The only people I could call was either family or maybe my broker.

No. Wait. I did have one more person.

I hesitated a bit before I pressed the call button. I heard it ring a few times before it connected.

"What is it? After I didn't hear a peep from you for over two weeks."

Jung Sooah sounded mad. I guess it was to be expected after I ignored about forty of her messages and ten of her calls.

"I was busy with some things. Do you have time right now?"

"Aren't you supposed to explain the reason for ignoring me first?"

“Do you want to know the reason or do you want to hear an apology?”

“Both.”

“I fell asleep for ten days after learning a new skill. I’m sorry.”

“Fine. What do you need?”

“I need someone to help me train. I only need about one or two hours.”

“Ok. How much are you paying?”

“100 dollars.”

It sounds expensive but if you wanted to use a licensed porter, this was a reasonable amount.

“Cool. Where should I meet you?”

“The same cafe from last time. I’ll be waiting.”

After I hung up, I headed over to the cafe. She appeared in some training clothes thirty minutes after. It was a slim fit...and I had to admit it looked pretty good.

We went to a park nearby. I spied a wall with a bullseye zone drawn on it. I passed her a bag filled with tennis balls.

“All you have to do is throw all these balls one by one at me until they’re all gone.”

“Am I aiming to hit you?”

“Throw it as hard and as fast as you can.”

“That won’t be hard.”

Smack!

She had thrown a tennis ball right in my face.

Did she want to die?

“...Not now. When I walk up to that wall.”

“Ohh. You’re not getting mad?”

“What good would it do to fight with you? Just do what I tell you to do.”

“Oppa, you know you’re no fun at all right?”

“I didn’t call you to entertain you. And don’t slip in that oppa word either. I don’t remember being so close with you.”

“Then should I call you Sangmin?”

“Call me sunbeh.”

“How about we meet in the middle. Sunbeh oppa. How about that?”

“Do what you want...”

\*\*\*

Woosh!

A tennis ball flew right by my ear. When I moved my chin to evade it, a second ball appeared as if it were waiting for me to do just that.

Smack!

“Keuk.”

“Sunbehoppa. You kind of suck at this.”



“Did you play baseball or something?”

“I was told you I was training to become an athlete. Didn’t I?”

“You didn’t. What sport?”

“Shot put.”

“Ah that’s why you have wide shoulders.”

Smack.

Keuk. She threw a hard one at my waist. I didn’t even see it coming. It was way faster than any of the ones she had been throwing before.

“It’s one of my insecurities, you know.”

“Whatever. Keep throwing at that same speed.”

Slap.

I lightly smacked myself on my cheek and focused. I saw her shoulder move. If I can’t see the ball, I just needed to watch for small movements in her body.

Woosh!

I barely evaded it this time. Getting into the groove of it, she started throwing the balls in earnest now one after the other. Even if they were just damn tennisballs, that wench was throwing them with a great amount of power behind each one. It felt like a shower of fists raining down on me.

Pop! Pop!

I avoided two balls in succession this time. I was getting used to their speed and could now almost follow them with my eyes. But this was only the beginning.

We did this for a while without speaking: her throwing and me dodging...or trying to. We didn't rest to do anything but to collect the balls when the bag was emptied.

"Haa. Haa. Let's rest a bit."

"Just a little more."

"I'm so tired."

"I can't let my sweat cool. Do you want to do drag this on for hours more when we can probably finish it in one."

"Just one minute yeah? I haven't used my shoulders in a while so they're really feeling stiff right now."

I couldn't say anything to that but nod.

"But why are you doing this kind of training?"

"To raise my skill capacity."

"Like this?"

"It's a passive skill."

"What is it?"

"Are you asking someone to tell you their skill?"

"Well who cares? It's just me."

"If you have the energy to say stupid things then let's start throwing the ball again."

"Chi. Fine. I'll throw."

She walked back to position, all the while muttering and threw the ball. I don't know if it was because we rested, but the ball I had thought I gotten used to was once again a blur.

The ball popped on the wall behind me into a crowd of high school students entering the park.

Pop!

“Ka!”

Even though the ball had lost a lot of its power from hitting bouncing off the wall, the boy who got hit with it collapsed. I felt a bit amazed at myself for having been able to withstand getting hit by that type of ball over and over again.

“Shit! What the hell is this?”

A boy in a school uniform and bleached blonde boy yelled out as she looked our way. I guess I needed to at least apologize since it was our fault.

“I’m sorry. The ball seems to have bounced over here on accident.”

“You think I’m sorry cuts it? What are you going to do about this? Want me to call the police?”

“Hey! Who taught you to talk to an adult like that!”

Jung Sooah couldn’t keep quiet anymore and yelled out angrily. Why the hell was she yelling at them when she was the one who

threw that fly ball?

The high school students smirked for a second before heading this way as a group. There were 10 of them.

“You stay behind me.”

I pushed Jung Sooah behind me.

“Why? Those no-mannered pieces of shit need to get beaten up into a pulp so they can learn how to speak to their elders.”

“Don’t try to show off your athletic skills and stay out of it. I’ll take of it.”

She made a huffing sound before stepping behind me. Yellow hair threw out a punch.

Woosh.

“Why are you dodging?”

“Before you throw out a punch, isn’t it good manners to at least try and talk it out first?”

“Go to hell!”

Woosh! Woosh!

He kept throwing punch after punch. Looking at his name tag, I saw his name was Lee Hansol. Am I doomed to meet Hansols forever?

Trip.

I hooked my foot over his leg as he was busy trying to connect a punch. He fell flat on his face before jumping right back up with a red face yelling, “Shit! Kill this asshole!”

Every one of those kids in the group ran forward to surround me in a circle. Though they were just high school kids, they were big enough to be called adults. I guess kids are eating well these days. Back in my days, I never had enough to eat so I didn’t grow too tall.

Woosh!

A punch flew at me from behind. I lowered my shoulder a bit and dodged it. Though there were ten of them, only four of them could attack me at one time. And they weren’t even trained hunters so they weren’t fighting as one in any sort of coordination either.

I just evaded all the attacks coming at me from all around. I didn’t really fight back but when one of them came at me to try to hold me, I unwittingly made a knee kick.

Pa!

“Ahhk! My nose!”

When he went down and started rolling around on the ground grabbing his nose, the rest of them ran at me with a renewed fire in their eyes. Though I was bigger than any of them, they probably thought they would win just from their sheer number. Even if they were only high schoolers, going up against 10 of them at once is not an easy thing. And it was almost impossible to keep from getting hurt without really fighting back.

If I really thought about it, this was a golden opportunity.

A great way to test out my new power ups.

If I knew this would happen, I wouldn't have had to pay that girl \$100 dollars to train me.

I bent my upper body back just as a kick barely grazed my nose. Not bad...but it had no force behind it. Even if I got hit with it, it wouldn't faze me a bit.

Woosh! Woosh! Woosh!

“Shit!”

Yellow hair got down to pick up a rock the size of a fist and threw it. What an idiot. It would have probably been better if he just

picked it up and hit me with it.

“Ah!”

The boy behind me yelled out before collapsing to the ground.

Hm. Guess that rock hit him when I dodged it. Well that sucks.



# Chapter 18

---

“Hey maybe you should calm down a bit. You might get hurt.”

“Shut your damn mouth!”

Lee Hansol opened his arms and grabbed me.

Chop!

“Keuk!”

I made a small chop to his adam’s apple. He started backing up while coughing up a storm. What I wanted...no...what I needed were attacks I could practice dodging. If someone decided to lay hands on me, I had no choice but to fight back to keep them back at bay.

Woosh!

A branch flew at my head. Yeah. Something like this. This was good.

But. Where did they get this?

After dodging the branch, I grabbed a foot that was flying towards me and flung it (and the boy attached to the other end) away. He seemed to float in the air for a few seconds before

crashing to the ground.

“Did he just throw Jongpal?”

“Shit. Is he a hunter?”

After seeing me toss a grown person into the air with just one hand, the kids started to get a little nervous.

“Like hell he is! He doesn’t even have any equipment on him so what does it matter?”

Lee Hansol yelled out. Maybe it was because of the coughing but his voice sounded hoarse and scratchy.

“Just kick all their asses!”

Jung Sooah was shaking her fist as she yelled out to me. I ignored her and took a step closer to the group of kids.

They all took a step back.

“I’m a bit disappointed. I thought you guys would be able to put up more of a fight than this.”

I said this in Lee Hansol’s direction. I even made a snorting noise to goad him. Since he had a nasty temper and seemed like the

leader of the pack, I figured if I egged him on just right ...everyone else would follow his lead.

I guess my acting wasn't too shabby because boy did he turn red.

“You bastard. You're so dead. Shit.”

He pulled out a knife from an inside pocket. It was a folding knife with a serrated blade. Maybe I should have worn a protective vest.

“Everyone attack!”

“Shit. But what if..”

“Just do what I say!”

Pop!

Smash!

After he yelled out, Lee Hansol pulled out a beer bottle from his backpack and broke it on a nearby boulder. Looks like these punks were here to drink out in the middle of the day.

“Aren't you guys underage?”

“Old lady. If you're going to keep being loud and annoying you

should just get lost.”

Smack!

The boy who just said that got a tennisball right in the face and fell back. He probably broke his nose.

“Who’s an old lady?”

She yelled out as she rolled another tennis ball in her hand. I could hear Lee Hansol grinding his teeth in anger. It wasn’t going the way he planned at all.

“Kill them both!”

“Ahhhh!”

The knife, broken beer bottle, and branch all came at me. Now this was a different attack from simple flurries of fists. These attacks were aiming for any part of my body that was most vulnerable.

“SunbehOppa!”

Smack!

The one brandishing the broken beer bottle at the very front

collapsed after being smacked right on the forehead with a tennis ball. The same happened to the second guy. And behind him was Lee Hansol with his knife.

Whoosh!

I shrugged so the blade would miss me. I grabbed him by the back of his neck and threw him.

The branch hit me in the back. Alright. I'll give you guys that one.

But when another broken bottle came right where my face was, I grabbed the offending arm and twisted it.

Crack!

“Ahh! Shit!”

“This bastard!”

I then stepped on one foot with my left, brought my right knee up, took his face in both hands and smashed it into my knee. He spun like a top a few times before falling over.

Smack!

Still another one dropped to the floor from Jung Sooh's tennis balls.

There were two more left to go. Lee Hansol, who had gotten back up after being tossed, and the one holding the branch.

As I rubbed my neck and walked towards them,, the branch boy dropped what he was holding and ran away.

“Dont. Don't come any closer!”

Lee Hansol yelled out as he tried to stab at me with his knife.. It seemed he was trying to attack me but the hand holding the knife was shaking so hard it wasn't even funny.

“Hey you. If you're a student, shouldn't you be studying instead of running around doing this shit? Where did you pick up all these bad habits from?”

“What? Shit. What the hell are you talking about right now when we're in the middle of a fight?”

“Ok fine. So then what'll it be? Do you want to keep holding onto that and get the crap beaten out of you? Or do you want to drop it and get the crap beaten out of you?”

“Stop talking and come at me! You bastard! Shit shit! You stupid bastard! I'm going to kill you!”

“You should read some books. Do you even have more than 100 words in your vocabulary?”

“Ahhhh!”

I guess he finally snapped.

I just kicked at his leg as he ran at me.

Snap!

There was a huge sound before he twirled in the air. Oops. Looks like I used way more force than I intended to. I could see his leg was twisted in a weird angle (probably broken) and his head would probably hit the ground first.

The ground was concrete. If he falls at that speed headfirst, his neck would probably snap. Best case scenario he would be paralyzed...worst case scenario he would be dead.

I wanted to keep it from happening, but my leg was still in the air from the momentum of the kick and I wouldn't make it in time. I wouldn't be able to grab him safely.

Right before his head slammed into the ground.

The whole world seemed to slow down.

Pop!

The same time I heard a pop sound, Lee Hansol's body flew back.

I saw him tumbling a few times before he finally stopped after rolling into a vending machine.

“..Hoo.”

I raised my chin and made a sigh of relief. Right before his head met with the unforgiving concrete, I completed my kick full-circle and used the same leg to kick back into his stomach.

It would probably hurt like hell but. I guess a stomach rupture is better than being dead.

\*\*\*

The ambulance came with the police and took away all the injured kids. It was broad daylight so there were quite a few witnesses who could vouch for us. The police had, at first, aimed their guns at me but later apologized after finding out what had happened.

This is why witnesses are so important.

“Even though they were students, since there were 10 of them



and were using weapons, this will be filed as self defense. But since there were quite a few injured, we will still need you to come with us. We need to take a statement from you.”

“That’s fine.”

I made a deep sigh and followed them to the station. This was my first time in a cop car but it was quite comfortable.

As soon as we stepped into the station, everyone looked our way.

“Oh. Is he the one who fought 10 to 1?”

A middle aged man in civilian clothes said as if amused. It looks like the news had already spread. As they were taking my statement down, Jung Sooah remained quiet next to me the entire time. I thought she would be loud and make a fuss so I was thankful for that.

The police asked.

“Girlfriend?”

“Is that what it looks like?”

Before I could say anything, Jung Sooah poked her head forward and asked. The police made an uncomfortable cough before looking back at me.

“She’s someone helping me to train.”

“It looks like your occupation is a porter. So what do you mean by training? You had a bunch of tennis balls with you.”

“Reflex training. Throwing and dodging.”

When I made a throwing motion, he nodded his head as if he understood and continued going through his documents. Then he slit his eyes and asked.

“Hm. It looks like there’s a record of you having gone to a dungeon? Did you go there as a hunter?”

“Yes. I luckily came by some hunter grade equipment...”

“Wait a second. Mr. Kyeongwee! Can you come here for a minute!”

The officer called for someone and continued looking through my documents again. It was a general rule that hunters received additional punishment if they injured a civilian.

Of course, since it was already agreed that I fought in self defense, I wasn’t too worried.

“Did you by any chance have any weapon of any kind on you?”

Mr. Kyeongwee asked.

“No. I was bare handed. The only thing that could have been a weapon are those tennis balls.”

“Hm...I guess it just concerns me that the injuries are so severe.”

“Wasn’t this self defense?”

Sooah asked. It was then.

“Who the hell is it! What bastard beat the shit out of my son!”

Someone had started barking at the top of his lungs the moment he stepped into the station. It was a forty something looking man dressed in a suit, and he was acting as if he owned the place. He finally spied me and slowly walked toward me.

“Was it you! You shit! You dare cripple my son?”

And he finished it off with a slap aimed at my face.

Woosh.

“You shit. How dare you dodge it!”

“Please calm down Hansol’s father. At least take a seat...”

The cops who had followed quickly behind tried to placate the man. It looks like this man is Hansol’s dad. I wondered where he got his bad temper from. Now I know.

# Chapter 19

---

“You little bastard! Do you know who I am? I’m a detective! Detective! I’ll make sure I put you away! You bastard! Know you’ll be rotting in jail for at least 100 years!”

“Please calm down and take a seat. Causing a scene like this will not change anything.”

“The same goes for all you guys! If you guys are the police, shouldn’t you be policing gangsters like this and locking them away! Huh! I remember all your names! You know I ate with your boss! And even went to a sauna with him! I did it all! You bastards!!!”

The middle aged man held onto the collar of the young officer trying to calm him down and yelled into his ear. In an instant, this one man show had caught the attention of every officer in the station. Lieutenant Lee, who had been patiently watching all this unfold, couldn’t take it anymore and put the man in handcuffs.

Clack!

“What, what are you doing! I demand you uncuff me this instant!”

“It is against the law to cause a commotion within a police station. If you do not wish to be locked up...then shut your mouth and sit down.”

The last phrase was barely audible to anyone else. Hansol's father's face immediately became bright red.

“How dare this shit talk to me like that!”

Temper tempter. No matter how powerless our Korean officers may be, attacking them so obviously was a bit too much. Shouldn't he know better than that if he was a detective?

In the end, Lieutenant Lee and some other officers took him into a holding cell.

“Ha...there is always one person like that no matter where you go.”

Sooah said.

“It's not like it's the first time we've see this. So.”

“Are you mad, SunbehOppa? You almost got hit. He even cursed at you and called you a gangster.”

“Does it make you mad?”

“A little.”

“With more experience, that’ll change.”

“I guess.”

She nodded her head. When you live a porter’s life, you hear all sorts of things. It’s almost so bad at first that you can’t sleep. But soon it becomes an everyday thing and you get used to it..and then you eventually forget how to even get mad at some point.

I looked at Lieutenant Lee and said.

“But are you ok? If he’s a real detective, it’ll be a big headache.”

“He’s not a detective so don’t worry. And it isn’t even the first time Lee Hansol got into trouble with the law.”

“Is he a well known troublemaker?”

When Sooah asked, Lieutenant Lee let out a short sigh.

“In the neighborhood, yes. There were a few incidences of attacks on other people but it seems his dad has some money so the cases always got squashed or he silenced them somehow. He supposedly owns a three story commercial building. Oh yes. You said you were a hunter?”

“Yes.”

“So there isn’t any proof of you having used or being armed with a weapon at the scene, I don’t see one on you so I can say you probably didn’t have any hunter grade equipment on you at the time either...did you use a skill by any chance? If proof comes out that a hunter had used a skill against a civilian, it could get really ugly.”

“No. I don’t have a skill.”

There was no point in trying to lie to an officer about not having a skill. This is because in every station, there is at least one person who is able to check a person’s skill.

But there was a reason why I risked telling this lie.

“We’ll know after we check. Wait here just a moment.”

Lieutenant Lee said this and left his seat.

A few moments later, Lieutenant Lee returned with a woman wearing a blue police jacket. Long hair in uniform. Isn’t that a violation of uniform regulations?

“This is Lieutenant Sohn Aram. Say hello.”

“I am Jeon Sangmin.”

“Mapo Police Department Special Response Team Inspector



Analyst Lieutenant Sohn Aram. I would like your cooperation in checking for any skills.”

“But do we have to do this?”

When Sooah asked, Inspector Sohn Aram responded.

“In serious cases such as this, we must be thorough in establishing his self-defense claim. We must be able to conclude that Mr. Jeon could not resolve the situation without defending himself – and to that end, we need to confirm that the amount of force used was also justifiable. It has helped your case because of the fact that they had used weapons and outnumbered you by so many. And because the power level of a civilian and hunter is so disparate, whether or not you used hunter grade equipment or skills becomes a very important point as well.

“But...”

Sooah looked at the officers for a moment before whispering into my ear.

“What are you going to do if they find out about your skill?”

Instead of answering her, I just shrugged my shoulders. Lieutenant Sohn Aram cleared her throat twice before saying.

“Remain still just like that.”

She grabbed my hand and closed her right eye. The skill for finding out another person's skill is called 'harmonizing', and if you held onto a person's hand like this then you were able to check for their skill as if it were your own.

The problem was, my skill only shows up in the left eye.

"Hmm.."

A moment later, she let go of my hands and turned to Lieutenant Lee and said, "He does not have a skill."

"So it is true."

"Yes."

Of course I definitely had my level o skill. They just didn't know it.

Strength, endurance, reflex...I had pretty much raised them at least about 50 percent. They were just unable to identify it. If she had closed her left eye, I would have surely been caught but who would ever think to do that?

It even took me, the owner of the skill, several days to figure that out.

“To win against 10 people without a skill or equipment. Whew. And you don’t even look like you would be any good in a fight. No offense.”

Lieutenant Lee stared at me with narrowed eyes for a minute. I casually accepted the gaze and stared right back at him. Lying and acting was a passive skill to a porter, it came very naturally with experience.

We were finally able to leave the station after the sun had already set. As I left through the doors, I turned around to look at the station. I saw Lieutenant Sohn Aram walking by beyond the doors.

“What happened? What does it mean that you don’t have a skill? Weren’t you training to raise your skill level?”

“I just happened to not get caught by the harmonizing skill.”

She stared at me as if she didn’t believe a word of what I was saying. She was probably thinking there was no way that I had a skill that couldn’t be detected by the harmonizing skill.

“Just tell me the truth. Do you have a skill or not?”

“Why the heck would I lie to you?”

“So that you could have an excuse to meet me...”

“I’m leaving.”

“Come on.”

\*\*\*

As soon as I got home, I decided I should organize my thoughts and findings on my skill. I sat down at my desk.

Flip.

I opened a notebook to an empty page and I wrote down the bullet points of the effort skill that I uncovered so far.

1. Killing a monster gives me reward points
2. The reward points are used to trade in to level up relevant skills based on specific actions.
3. The most I had used so far at a time was 500 points. It is possible that some level ups could require more.
4. I cannot be caught by those with the harmonizing skill. But I might get caught if they close their left eye..?

These four were the essential points. Under that I wrote out the different level ups I was able to do.

[Increase strength: 50%]

[Increase endurance: 50%]

[Increase reflexes: 50%?]

I was able to pretty much figure out the increase in strength and endurance using weights and timing myself, but finding out just how fast my reflexes were now was hard to really measure. But I just put down 50% for now since strength and endurance went up by the same percentage.

I closed my left eye and confirmed my stats. [0,3,350] It looks like every time I upgrade an ability, my proficiency goes up one as well. That means I can do this at least 97 more times.

# Chapter 20

---

“97 times...”

I took out a calculator. Assuming that I get the same results every time, if I use all 97 power ups on strength then...holy crap.

It wasn't hard to calculate what that would mean. My strength right now was upped one time so all I had to do was add 1 to 97 and multiply it by 1.5.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Seeing the results, I jumped up from my seat.

180 times.

What if I get so strong I can shatter a planet with just one punch.

Gulp. Gulp.

“Ha!”

I drank a glass of cold water and tried to calm down a bit. Ok let's start from the beginning and try to think of it in the most rational, practical, and reasonably sound way. There is no way that I could really become 180 times more powerful. That was a number that wouldn't be possible for a level 10 skillbook or a level 100 skillbook

or even a level 1000 skillbook. There is no way there would be that kind of a power locked in a 0 level skill. Right?

When I finally calmed down a bit and thought about it more carefully, I realized something. I multiplied 1.5 by 98. I thought it was an obvious thing to multiply it but it would make more sense if the percentage was not a multiplier but a progression until the full potential of the skill. In other words, what if the first round upped my ability to 50% of its potential, the second time 75% of its potential until I reached 100% of my potential.

The only way to find out would be to try to up the same skill one more time. I took my phone out and called my broker.

Ring-

Click.

“Why are you calling at this time?”

I heard my broker’s sleepy voice come through the line.

“Do you have any job openings?”

“If I did, I would have called you. You know that openings in general parties aren’t easy to come by.”

“If a spot does open up, can you give me spot priority?”

“Why are you in such a hurry to go back? People usually take at least a week’s rest after going into a dungeon.”

“You know. What my goal is.”

“To buy an apartment without a loan before 30?”

“...no, not that. Well, that is another goal but...”

The going rate for apartments in Seoul were about 1,000,000 dollars. The population is down by about 50% since the monsters first appeared, but the landscape had also weakened so building of any new high rises had become banned. This created less room for more housing structures, and all the existing structures had become extremely expensive.

“To become an amazing hunter who surpasses even his teachers? You mean that? I thought you were joking.”

“Not a joke.”

“For someone who became a porter because you couldn’t get employed...ok. Well I guess dreams are better if they are bigger.”

I could hear him laughing over the line.

“In any case, don’t worry. I’ll give you a ring right away when a



spot opens up.”

“Thank you.”

“Yeah.”

And then I didn’t hear a peep from my broker for a whole week.

\*\*\*

All I did was stare at my phone that entire week. I didn’t have a tv at home or any hobbies I particularly enjoyed, so there was nothing else for me to do. With my extra time, I just went to the neighborhood gym and worked out like hell. I finally couldn’t wait any longer and called him.

“Hey. I’m sorry about that. There just aren’t any openings these days.”

“Really?”

“Because general parties usually already have their parties organized with people they know and trust. I even took your profile and went here and there to get someone to bite but nothing. Anyone who’s looking is looking for an expert. They were all reluctant on hiring a beginner. Things are probably worse especially before of the irregulars.

“But none have appeared recently.”

“Well. You never know when one might decide to appear again.”

“Is Mr. Eum Hyunjoon not going into dungeons?”

“I heard he got recruited into a regular team. He probably won’t be hiring amateurs any more.”

“Shit.”

I thought he was pretty good...but to think he got recruited into a regular team so fast. I figured he would probably call me again since I did show him I was pretty good that last time. But if he was already recruited...

Even though he was good, he’s only a level 1 tanker which would mean he would be the lowest level on a regular team. He would be busy trying to look good to everyone else on the team, and have no time to bring me along for the ride.

“If you’re that desperate, why don’t you create your own team?”

“Me?”

“Yeah. You have a lot of experience so you should know enough people to be able to clear a level 1 dungeon at least.”

“Hm...I can't really think of anyone..”

“Yeah. Since you don't really get close to people.”

“I'll think about it.”

I thought about my broker's suggestion after getting off the call. I couldn't think of any reason not to do it. Armed with my current skill and my slew of experience, clearing a level 2 dungeon could even work. Even if they might be lacking in ability, it really could work if I just got a group of level 1 hunters together.

“I just need to get the right number of people.”

It was fine if we didn't clear the dungeon. The only thing I needed were my reward points. I put up a posting at the hunter market.

[Looking for a party to clear a Baekoonsa dungeon. Heading party. Beginners eligible. Experienced hunters welcome. 10 people party. Mages and healers priority.]

[TN: Heading party refers to a party that has never cleared a dungeon before]

Then I waited. Usually heading parties are made, not because their goal is to clear a dungeon, but so they can gain experience. And most experienced hunters will not join a heading party. But I didn't want to lie and say that it was to clear a dungeon because if

anyone found out the truth later, it would ruin my reputation.

When I went to check up on my listing, I saw there were a few responses.

-Who is Jeon Sangmin? Anyone heard of him?

-He's a newbie. No matter how desperate you are for money, don't join this type of party. If the party head is a beginner, you'll just end up dead.

-Hm. There isn't even any information on him.

-But it looks like he has a conscience since he did write that it was a heading party. Not going still.

"Hm..."

The responses were worse than I expected. After thinking about it for a minutes, I put down my abilities.

[Level 2 equipment. Level 1 skill – pending.]

Since I wrote Level 1 skill – pending instead of just level 1 skill, it should be closer to the truth. The responses started flowing in.

-Isn't it dependable if he has a level 2 equipment?

-He might have just one thing. What does that do?

That one hurt. I might just have one weapon but I'm plenty strong.

-Even if he just has one, shouldn't that be enough? If he has that kind of equipment, his abilities should be pretty good too. He even has a skill.

Oh. Who is this?

-But what is that level 1 skill?

-Isn't that just a typo? He might have meant that he's a level 1.

-I'm going to ask. I sent him a note.

-Who are you? You're bold.

I got the note. I opened it up with an anxious heart.

It was Jung Sooh.

Is this chick a stalker or something? How the heck did she even know I posted this?

[Are you kidding?]

As soon as I sent her that text, she immediately responded.

[Don't you need a porter?]

[Why would I need a porter when I can do it myself?]

[Hey. As the party head you should just focus on hunting.]

[Whatever. Get lost.]

[Don't be like that. Come on. Think about it. The chance to hire a licensed porter for a level 1 general party doesn't come by every day.]

[My goal isn't to clear the dungeon anyway. After killing a few monsters, if things get tough, I was thinking of just leaving.]

[That's fine. I'm trying to gain experience. I'll only take half pay. I can't get a job these days anyway. And it's nice to join one where I can trust someone.]

I was beginning to sway. Though I didn't necessarily need a porter, it was true that having one would make things a lot easier. Carrying around a heavy bag not only took its toll on you physically but it also made it difficult to cope with unexpected situations.

[Why don't you stand by. We'll talk after I get more people.]

[Yayuh! I'll be waiting. Party head.]

After waiting another day, two more inquiries came in. Both were beginners. Nothing I could do about it. I couldn't wait anymore. I thought I would have to just form a 5 person party.

I touched my phone for a bit...then made a call.

# Chapter 21

---

The next day.

As soon as I reached the Baekoonsa dungeon entrance, I saw glasses girl. I had made a round of calls to all the people from Eum Hyunjoon's party and glasses girl had said she would come. The other person who agreed too come was manager Kim Soongeun.

It made sense that glasses girl came since she's a total beginner, but manager Kim's reputation must be as terrible as I suspected for him to join us even though he was a mage.

"You're early."

"Thank you for calling me."

Bow.

She bent 90 degrees at the waist and bowed. When my gaze naturally went to her breast area, Jung Sooah jabbed me in my side. Hard.

"Who is this?"

"Someone who was in my party the last time I went and cleared a dungeon. Say hi."



“I’m Bae Yeonkyoung. I’m a level 1 archer.”

“I’m Jung Sooah.”

So awkward. I asked Sooah.

“Come on. Make some conversation. We’re teammates now so be friendly.”

“Is that a request?”

“Well. I guess.”

“Ok then.”

“Hm? You’ll do it?”

“Sure since it’s SunbehOppa’s request. You said your name was Bae Yeonkyoung?”

She smiled brightly as she asked glasses girl. After 10 minutes, the two were acting as if they were friends for 10 years and laughing together. Amazing. If there was a skill for interpersonal skills, she would have an automatic level 10.

As the appointed time approached, people started to arrive one after the other. Two new people from online who came were

comprised of one archer and one warrior.

“I am warrior Cho Youngoo.”

“I’m archer Han Joonseok.”

Cho Youngoo, with his good physique, and the almost dwarflike Han Joonseok were 20 something friends. They had set up a chicken shop together but, wanting to fulfill a lifelong dream to become a hunter, they had sold the shop and used the money to buy hunter grade equipment. Unfortunately, this coincided with the appearance of the irregulars and they didn’t have a chance to really begin their dream...until now.

Cho Youngoo asked.

“Are all five of us here?”

“We’re still waiting for one more. Let’s wait for a minute.”

10 minutes after the promised time, they could finally see manager Kim walking leisurely towards them.

“Ah ah. There was so much traffic on the way here. Did you wait long?”

“You’re not too late. Since everyone is here, we should get going.”

“Ah..? Ah. Ok.”

When I brushed it off as no big deal, manager Kim seemed to be taken aback. To be honest, I had told him the appointed time was 30 minutes earlier than it really was. Since he still managed to be late, I made a note to myself to tell him the appointed time is an hour earlier.

\*\*\*

Clang!

Upon entering, the firsts monsters we met were 3 cave wolves. When manager Kim did his sleep spell, one fell asleep. Han Joonseok and glasses girl both let their arrow fly and, as I expected, they both missed their marks.

“Cho Youngoo! Stick to me!”

“Muh...mee?”

“I explained it to you earlier!”

“Ok!”

The plan was for the archers to attack first while Cho Youngoo would do a physical attack after since he had good protective gear.

But even though the wolves were running at him, he remained rooted where he stood without taking a step.

He only started running after I yelled at him.

“Ahhhh!”

He screamed at the top of his lungs and pushed forth his shield. He stretched out his arms to protect himself, but it also cut off any way of attacking. I guess he wasn't planning on using his sword at all?

But no matter. That was enough. The only thing I needed was a brief moment.

Cho Youngoo had so many openings, it was almost embarrassing. There was no way the wolf wouldn't see what I could see. And I was not one to lose an opportunity to capitalize on a predictable route of attack.

One wolf saw the opening and rushed at Cho Youngoo's side. And I matched its timing perfectly to stab it right in the neck with my sword.

Squelch!

My blade slid in and out quite easily before the blood began to gush out. I almost laughed when I saw the familiar green number appear. To think that I killed it in one blow even though the sword

wasn't in buff mode. Aren't I too strong now?

“Huh?”

When the blood spilled out of the wolf, Cho Youngoo quickly stepped away in surprise. The problem was, he had stepped into the path of the other wolf.

I threw the bloodysword I was holding and, right before it could take a chunk out of Cho Youngoo's neck, the sword slid right through the wolf's eye – blade first.

Cho Youngoo collapsed right where he stood and stared blankly at the dying wolf. I walked up to the wolf and pulled out my sword.

Cho Youngoo flinched again at the noise.

For a big guy, he had a lot more fear in him than I expected. I expect Kim Youngchul might even be braver than this guy. No, he probably was. A lot braver.

“I'll take care of the last one too.”

“SunbehOppa! Nice! You were so amazing!”

I could hear Sooah yelling behind me.

“You don’t have to do that kind of thing here.”

[TN: He’s referring to when he first met and Sooah’s job as a porter was to compliment Hansol.]

“But it was my honest opinion this time.”

“I get it. I get it. You’re super into your job right now. Be quiet or you’ll wake the wolf.”

And I stabbed into the last wolf’s neck. This time, now that the bloodysword had soaked up blood and was in full buff mode, it slid into the tough wolf’s hide like butter.

[+100]

I got 300 reward points in just one round. The fact that everyone on my party kind of sucked turned out to be a lot of help. With no one else to really attack, I’m pretty much ending up with all the reward points possible.

Jung Sooah walked over to me and started wiping the blood off my face. When I tried to take away the handkerchief, she shook her head.

“This is my job.”

“I have hands too.”

“Ah. Come on. If I do this extra service for you, just accept it gladly.”

“Just do what you’re paid to do.”

I have my pride. I had no intention of accepting something like this when I was only paying her 50 dollars.

“Miss porter lady, me too.”

Manager Kim said to her while pointing to his shoulders.

“Why?”

“Using my skill has got me a bit tired. Massage my shoulders a bit, why don’t you?”

What the hell is this old man saying.

“Manager Kim...that’s a bit...”

“SunbehOppa.”

When I tried to say something, Sooah shut me up. When I looked at her, she shook her head and smiled brightly as if to say it was fine.

“Manager Kim~ So your shoulders hurt a lot~ Then I’ll give you a special massage~”

Sooah walked to manager Kim with the biggest smile on her face.

“I’ll do it very softly~”

Crunch.

“Euk..?”

“Oh no. Does that hurt? But I did it softly. It seems manager Kim is more sensitive than I expected.”

“Wha, what! It doesn’t hurt at all! It feels refreshing! HAHAAHAH!”

Crunch. Cruunch.

“Ahhhhh...”

“Isn’t it so very refreshing?”

“Yeh...yesssss.”



“Then should I apply just a little bit more pressure?”

“This is quite enough...”

CRUNCH!

When Sooah dug right into the his spine, manager Kim’s body shook as if he’d been struck by lightning.

Looks like he wasn’t screaming because he couldn’t...not because he was holding it in.

“Oh looks like you’re knotted up here too.”

“Kaaah!”

Cruunch, crunch. Crunch,

CRUNCH! CRUUUNCH!

Snap!

“Ha? Did something break?”

When Sooah let go, manager Kim passed out..foaming at the

mouth.

## Chapter 22

---

“..you didn’t kill him, did you?”

“I have a sports massage certification. He’ll feel real good once he wakes up again.”

“You’re certified in all sorts of things aren’t you.”

“Should I do it for you too, SunbehOppa?”

“No.”

“I’ll do it softly.”

“Quit it. Don’t even think about it.”

When the monsters evaporated, two ores were dropped behind. Not bad. Not bad at all.

“What a good start. It would be nice if we got a dropped item today. Then don’t we get a bonus?”

Jung Sooah asked while picking up the ores.

“Yeah right. You really think that’ll happen?”

In all my 6 years as a porter, I've never seen an item drop in a level 1 dungeon. Even in a level 2 dungeon, I'd only seen an item drop two times...and they were both only level 1 items. That is how rare it was to get an item in a low level dungeon. Getting a skillbook from a level 4 monster in one go was like a one in a million event.

Manager Kim finally woke up.

“Umm..what happened?”

“Doesn't it feel good? Should I do it for you again next time?”

“Huh?”

“I'll do it for you every time you mess up on your skill.”

“No, no no worries. That'll never happen.”

As Jung Sooah tried to put her hands on his shoulders, manager Kim violently shook his head to show her just how much he didn't need it.

\*\*\*

Everyone in the party quickly adapted to the dungeon. Cho Youngoo was now able to use his shield successfully and even begin to attack as well while Han Joonseok was able to now hit his mark

1 out of 3 tries with his arrow. I also made glasses girl slow down and concentrate on accuracy rather than speed.

Most surprisingly, even manager Kim improved. He was now able to put to sleep 3 monsters at a time every time. It seemed it wasn't his ability that was at fault but his concentration.

As everyone steadily improved, our dungeon clearing pace picked up as well.

Now things had changed. Everyone agreed that our goal had become clearing the dungeon.

“Whew.”

When we had gone around the dungeon, Jung Sooah's backpack was filled to the top with ores. If I were to estimate, it was probably over 150kg. A male porter could usually carry up to 200kg and a girl porter could carry 150kg. She was now carrying more than she was used to.

When she couldn't store any more in her bag, we had no choice but to start filling mine.

“I'm sorry. Even though this is my job.”

“It would be a bigger problem if you overwork yourself. Just do what you can.”

“Ok.”

“And I won’t know until I finish the calculations, but I’ll make sure to pay you as much as you worked.”

“Really?”

“You worked this hard. I can’t pay you only \$50 in good conscience.”

“Yes! SunbehOppa, you’re a great boss!”

“But didn’t we pretty much kill them all? Why isn’t it clearing?”

Manager Kim, who had been resting on the ground, asked.

Baekoonsa dungeon splits into two different courses. Both courses do not meet so you have to complete one trail, come back to the beginning, and complete the other trail. We had already completed both trails.

“No...it can’t be...”

Sooah opened her mouth. She didn’t finish what she was about to say, but everyone knew what she was thinking. A monster doesn’t always appear at the same spot. But there was a small chance that an irregular could appear.

“Let’s leave this spot first.”

We had pretty much killed enough monsters so there was no need for us to get greedy and try to clear the dungeon. We started heading quickly to the front of the dungeon.

“Stop.”

I raised my hand to have everyone behind me stop.

There was a cave wolf curled up on the floor in front. Well...I thought it was a cave wolf, but it was two times the normal size.

“It’s the dungeon boss.”

“How is it here...?”

Glasses girl asked with a tense face. Yep. You guessed it. The Baekoonsa dungeon does not have a dungeon boss. There was only one reason why this boss was here.

“It’s an irregular.”

At my words, everyone started to freak out.

\*\*\*

We backed up and went back to the crossroads we came from. This was because if we stayed any longer and it saw us, we would have had to fight immediately. Cho Youngoo asked.

“Can’t we put a sleep spell on it and kill it then?”

“That kind of spell does not work on a dungeon boss.”

“How dare you flap your mouth when you’re only a beginner? You think I didn’t do anything if that were possible?”

Manager Kim yelled out at the same time I answered him. That old man’s mouth will get him into a lot of trouble someday.

“Aren’t you being too harsh? If you know so much, shouldn’t you suggest an idea to get rid of him then?”

“You think I’m being like this because I know...I’m just saying if you’re a rookie, you should just stay quiet.”

When Han Joonseok took Cho Youngoo’s side, manager Kim said his last sentence but stopped talking after that. At least they didn’t start going at it.

“There must be something we could do?”

Glasses girl asked. She remained a more calm attitude, different



from the last raid. Seeing her improvement, I felt a little proud for having given her that small advice.

“I’m thinking.”

I had packed 3 cases of pepper bombs just in case we would cross paths with an irregular. This was to take away their sense of smell and sight. It wasn’t anything special – just homemade – but the difference between having it and not having it would prove to be huge.

Slap.

I lightly slapped my cheeks. Concentrate.

There is a big difference between a normal monster and a boss monster. If I were to put it into perspective, it would be like trying to fight 10 normal monsters all at one time. And on top of that, any knock out magic like sleep spells don’t work on it – we can only beat it by physical attacks. For this reason, whenever there is a boss, it is normal for everyone to prepare thoroughly ahead of time before entering the dungeon.

But we were not ready to take on a boss. Nope.

I started talking aloud to myself.

“The goal is to get out safely. The problem is, that thing is blocking our only exit...”

I turned to face the party. They were all people who came here by trusting in me. Though our relationship was strictly business, that's where trust starts. I felt like if I just got them through this successfully, these people would put their full confidence in me from here on out. That manager Kim could really be a good addition to my team too.

There is an opportunity in every crisis.

I slowly spoke.

“Can you give me a little time alone? I'll be right back.”

\*\*\*

How should I do this? I took inventory of what I had available to me.

One warrior and two archers. I also had a mage and a porter.

If I looked at it objectively, Han Joonseok and glasses girl just kind of sucked. I couldn't rely on them to do any kind of real damage. It would be a relief if they hit their mark. The best thing that they could do was maybe create some sort of distraction.

The cave wolf was at least two times bigger than Cho Youngoo. If it bit on his shield and pulled, Cho Youngoo would most definitely

be dragged around like a rag doll. He would either have to let go of the shield or hold onto it...and both would be disastrous.

What if the archers stand at a distance from each other and shoot. Then the wolf would probably go after the archer that hits it.

Then Cho Youngoo would be between them...waiting for the wolf to attack one – after which he would follow to aid the archer who would be under attack. If Cho Youngoo is slow to react or the wolf moves too fast, the archer would die no matter what. But if Cho Youngoo succeeds in reaching the archer first, then the other archer can keep shooting at the wolf. Then when the wolf starts heading toward the other archer, I would step in.

I shook my head.

This plan sucked balls. There's no way the wolf would move the way I want it to. I can't rely on chance and call it a plan.

“If we do this, we'll all die.”

No matter how much I wracked my brain, all I could think of was running away. Luckily, there were two paths in this dungeon. If one person can lure the wolf into one path, then the rest who would be hiding in the other path could run away and live. We needed a mickey.

And the only person who can do this in our group was me. No

one else would have the balls or skills to do it.

Hey. At least now I feel a little better since I know what to do. It's not an impossible thing I guess. I mean, I do have some things up my sleeve.

Bloodysword. Pepper bombs. And my "effort".

I closed my left eye to check my stats.

[0,3,2350]

2350 reward points.

What can I do with this?

# Chapter 23

---

First things first, I needed to figure out my end goal.

What was it that i wanted?

If I go unprepared, even if I might have thought I was prepared, I'll die. What I needed was the ability to run away. Yeah.

That was easy.

I needed the speed to be able to outrun an animal that had four legs. No. I needed to have the kind of speed that would outrun a cave wolf boss and not get caught in a chase.

Tap. Tap.

I tied my shoelaces and tapped the ground with my feet. I'm not that fast of a runner to begin with. I could do about 100 meters in 13 seconds...ish? It was pretty fast for an average person, but I would be considered slow if compared to sprinters. I'd be cave wolf snack in seconds if I tried to run away like this. I need to be able to do under 10 seconds if I might have a prayer of outrunning that beast.

I did a light sprint back and forth in the left trail to get a feel for the terrain. I don't know if it's because of my up in endurance, but I wasn't winded in the least.

Now it was time to sprint like hell. I went down and got in position...then kicked the ground to help me get a running start. I almost fell a few times since the ground wasn't really level. After I did this about five times, I could feel my body get a bit lighter.

“Yes.”

Tap. Tap.

The sound was different. Every time I took a step, it almost felt as if the length of the ground was shrinking. But I couldn't be happy with just this.

I needed to feel lighter. I needed to be faster.

Woosh!

I could hear the sound of wind whipping past my ear. I could taste the humid air filling my lungs. I could feel my heart pumping the oxygen throughout my body. I could hear the bu-bump of my heart and blood vessels pumping the blood. It now felt as if my body was floating through the air.

More. A little more. As fast as I can. No, more than that.

“Huk. Huk. Huk.”

After I snapped back to attention, I realized everyone was staring

at me with wide eyes.

\*\*\*\*

[0,5,850]

I saw that I upgraded twice. The first time, I used up 500 reward points..and the second time, I used up 1000. There was no way for me to find out exactly how much faster I was now but, seeing everyone's reaction, it should be enough for me to outrun that thing.

“Uh...you...what the hell was that just now?”

Manager Kim stuttered as he tried to get the words out.

“What do you mean?”

“Whoa. SunbehOppa. Did you know you were just flying?”

“I flew?”

“Well, you weren't exactly flying. But it almost looked like it.”

“We heard a loud noise behind us so we looked back, and we saw you kicking the ground running at us. You were taking a few meters every step. It looked like you almost like you were stepping

on air.”

Glasses girl said.

“Wait wait?”

“That you were stepping on air...?”

“No, not that. You said that you heard a loud noise?”

“Yeah. At first it was just stomping noises, but later it sounded almost like an earthqua...”

“Damn! Everyone run into the right trail right now! Jung Sooah! You take this and if the wolf starts heading towards the left trail, throw it!”

I didn’t have the time to revel in my new upgrade. I handed one of my pepper bombs to her.

“Why all of a sudden?”

“The wolf is going to come! Hurry!”

There was no way the wolf wouldn’t have heard something that sounded like an earthquake.



“Over...over there.”

Cho Youngoo said with a stammer in his voice.

Grrrrrrr.

The sound of growling rung throughout the dungeon.

Luckily it didn't start running at us. It was staring at us... probably observing us at first.

“Manager Kim. Once I throw a pepper bomb, take everyone to the right trail.”

“Me? How? Everyone should look after themselves.”

“Please.”

“Shit. How about you?”

“I'll distract him and lead him to the left trail. Once you make sure it follows me in, everyone run out of the dungeon and get help.”

“SunbehOppa! That't too dangerous...!”

“Just do it!”

I wish I had more time to explain. But the wolf was now coming down the hill and running towards where we were. I raised my hand and threw the pepper bomb.

“Run!”

“SunbehOppa! If you die, I’ll kill you!”

Is she stupid? How does that make sense?

The pepper smoke spread out into the air. This type of weapon was more grievous to a wolf with its sensitive nose and eyes than to a human. There was no better way to make sure the wolf would attack in my direction than this.

“This way! You wolf bastarrrrd!”

I started yelling out while backing up. This pepper smoke should not only irritate the hell out of him, it should also take away its vision and sense of smell. The only thing it would have left to rely on would be sound – and my voice was ringing throughout the dungeon.

I ran into the left tunnel trail.

I could see its huge shadow chasing after me.

I yelled out while running.

“Come here, stupid!”

“Grrrrr!”

It was growling with its fangs baring menacingly. If I were to gauge its level, it was probably between level 2 and level 3. But compared to a regular monster, a boss had a higher chance of dropping an item.

If I could kill it, there was a good chance I could make out with something super valuable.

I got into a position that would let me run away at any time and looked at the wolf. It kept shaking its head and sneezing. Hahaha the pepper. Maybe I could attack it right now.

But I didn't do anything. It could be faking it.

Without any warning, it sped at me. I knew it!

Since I was in position, I quickly ran for it. The wolf's speed seemed so slow to me. But because it was so much bigger, it would be able to cover more distance so I couldn't drag it out. The more I dragged it out, it would catch up to me.

There was nothing to think about. I had to first lure it into this

trail, run a lap and come out of the dungeon.

The wolf was really running now.

The race had begun.

\*\*\*

Stomp! Stomp!

My body felt as light as a feather. Every step I took felt like I was being propelled forward. It was certainly not an exaggeration to say that I was indeed stepping on air. It felt like I could be doing 100 meters in about 6.5 seconds.

The wolf was sprinting as fast as it could. The wolf was indeed faster than me. But the cave's terrain wasn't straight, but curvy. Luckily I was used to it and it wasn't.

“Ha. Ha.”

I could see the end of the tunnel now.

This is the first place I almost fell.

I could see the pothole.

It was probably due to the water dripping from the ceiling. If I don't slow down, I would definitely slip and fall.

The wolf opened its mouth in preparation for swallowing my head whole. I crouched low and jumped over the hole while the wolf slipped as soon as it stepped into the water-filled hole.

The wolf tumbled and smashed into the tunnel wall. Powder from the ceiling drifted down to the wolf in puffs.

“Hmm?”

I looked back and smiled at my good fortune. A stalactite on the wall had pierced the wolf on one side. It was struggling to get up.

This could be the best chance I had at attacking and killing it. Jackpot.

# Chapter 24

---

I approached it cautiously.

“Stay still...”

“Grrrrr...”

It's fangs were longer than the length of my palm. Its bloodshot eyes kept watching my every move. It was dangerous for me to get too close to its head. Unlike the monster that had been hit by the truck and couldn't move properly, this one still had enegry to spare.

I needed to move in on it's side.

Stab!

“GRAAAA!”

When I entered its hide with my bloodysword, it tried to jump up on top of me.

“Keu!”

I let go of my sword and hopped back. I had no time to think. The only thing I could see was its red eyes and sharp gleaming fangs.

When I thought I had evaded it, I saw stars. I had hit my back on something hard and I couldn't see from the pain of it. I must have hit back into a boulder.

I hurriedly put my hand in my pocket, pulled out another pepper bomb, and threw it.

As smoke wafted out, I covered my mouth and nose and got up to run away.

The floor began to shake. The wolf must have pounced on the ground I was sitting just moments before. It could probably hear everything so I needed to be careful not to make too much noise.

I held my breath while I waited for the air to clear enough for me to see again.

1 minute? No. If I can just wait 30 more seconds, I would be able to run away.

Bump. Bump. Bump.

The sound of my heartbeat was too loud. I wanted to run this instant. But I needed to be practical and not just follow my emotions.

The boss now had two holes pierced in its side. The wound from

the stalactite and the stab from my bloodysword.

Would it just faint with enough time?

There's no way. Monsters had ridiculous recovery speeds. If I wanted to kill it, now would be my best chance. But the weapon that could pull that off was stuck in that monster's hide.

Should I just go at him barefisted. It can't see anything, after all. Ha. That would be suicide. Even if I got lucky and found my bloodysword, it would probably shred me to pieces before I could even pull it out.

Only thing was to run as soon as I could see. It sucks that I have to leave the bloodysword behind but not enough to risk my neck.

I could hear it whining. I can't blame it. I'm not breathing and even my nose and neck is itching like hell.

The vision that had blurred from the physical shock of hitting the boulder was starting to come back. I still couldn't see because of the smoke but that was fine.

I carefully started moving. If it were outside, the smoke would have dissipated quickly but the cave have almost zero ventilation. It wasn't flowing out anywhere.

I finally took in a deep breath. The pepper filled smoke clogged my neck, but it was nothing compared to the sweet oxygen filling



my lungs.

The wolf heard me sucking in my breath and realized where I was, but it was only after I had already gotten a running start. It was chasing very close behind.

The blood that had been flowing from its wounds had already clotted.

\*\*\*

Running for my life, it wasn't long before I came to the crossroads.

Slam! Slam!

The wolf was running straight at me, all the while bumping into the walls of the cave due to the curvy trail. Concerned about the closing gap between us, my legs tangled up on themselves.

Right before I tripped and fell, I pushed up off the ground with my hands and regained my balance. Shit. It closed the distance even more in that time. At this rate, it would catch up to me before I could make it out of the dungeon.

“Huk. Huk!”

Everything was getting dizzy. I guess I didn't quite heal from

hitting against the rock. And now I was almost out of breath. Maybe it was because I was so anxious but I was exhausted after running around the tunnel trail just one time. If I didn't have my endurance level up, I would have collapsed long ago.

I was now about 100 meters away from the dungeon entrance. This was where it was now uphill. Would I make it?

It would be 50/50.

I should be...

Woosh!

“Kr!”

An arrow plunged itself into the wolf's forehead.

“Over this way!”

It was Jung Sooah's voice. When I turned my head, I could see glasses girl and Han Joonseok aiming their bows this way from the top of the hill.

I sped up and ran as fast as I could to where they were. They let two more arrows fly and both hit their marks. Well, if they missed such a huge wolf that was right in front of them, they didn't have the right to call themselves archers.

They hit it...but it was definitely not even close to enough to kill it. Annoyed now, it reached the top of the hill in one monstrous leap. As if she were waiting for this, Sooah threw her pepper bomb.

“What...”

“Over here!”

Sooah grabbed my hand and pulled. We all ran to the dungeon’s exit.

“Mr. Cho Youngoo!”

“Yes!”

The warrior unsheathed his sword. What are they trying to do?

I quickly scanned the area around me. The pepper smoke was streaming into the cave and there was a boulder in front of Cho Youngoo. And the boulder was tied to the ceiling by a rope. I looked up at the ceiling. At that instant, the wolf burst through the smoke.

“Now!”

The boulder that was hanging by a rope fell onto the wolf’s back.

The wolf was pinned to ground. Overwhelmed by the shock of the weight, the wolf wasn't able to focus.

“We did it!”

Everyone began to cheer. Jung Sooah yelled out.

“Now run for it!”

“Ok!”

I said it already, but a monster's recovery ability is crazy. It might seem like it was a fatal attack but it would probably heal in a manner of minutes if not seconds.

Everyone knew this.

“Wait.”

I stopped.

“SunbehOppa?”

“Party head!”

“I can kill it.”

“What?...but...”

“I know. It won’t die from the boulder. It’s just in shock. But...”

I shut up and started walking to the monster. It shuddered a bit but didn’t move any more than that.

If it had been fine, I would have been dead by now.

I went to the wolf’s side, grabbed my sword by the handle, and twisted.

The wound widened and the sword began to soak it the blood. But there wasn’t much blood – just as I thought.

“Bye.”

I pulled out my sword and slammed it back in – but this time into the wolf’s neck.

The wolf’s eyes rolled back for a second before closing again.

[+1000]

1000 reward points.

Damn.

“Did it die?”

Han Joonseok asked. When I nodded, he dropped his bow and collapsed to the ground. Everyone else followed suit.

“Haa...to think we really killed it...how did that happen? Why wasn't it able to use its strength anymore?”

When Jung Sooah asked, I pointed to my bloodysword and said.

“It seems the sword had sucked up all of its blood.”

“What?”

“It had two huge wounds. But weirdly, it was barely bleeding.”

“So? How did that tell you anything?”

“Well, it was actually when it got hit by the arrow.”

“Oh...you're right. When it was hit with the arrow, it didn't even bleed.”

Glasses girl said. She was the one who had shot the first arrow.

“Right. That was why I figured it was almost done when it didn’t get up again. No matter how strong the monster, if it loses all its blood...”

Everyone nodded their heads.

That was how I won and ended with the bloodysword, rare ores, and reward points.

“But where is manager Kim?”

“Oh. He went out to call for help.”

“Nah, he just ran away. Bastard.”

“Yeah? Well, it’s not like he would have been any help if he stayed anyway...”

It still sucked. Having a mage on such a low level team probably wouldn’t happen again.

“Who said I ran away!”

That was when we saw manager Kim walking toward us from behind a boulder. He had been hidden so well that no one had

noticed he was still there.

“Wow...amazing. Were you there this whole time?”

At Jung Sooah’s words, manager Kim started yelling out.

“Do you really think I would ditch a fellow teammate and run away?”

“Yes.”

Everyone answered at the same time.



# Chapter 25

---

The wolf was now starting to evaporate. He slowly disappeared into ashes, and as those ashes turned to dust I thought to myself.

Irregular.

In the month and a half since the incident of irregulars had happened all over the world, this was the second irregular I went up against. I don't know how many more people might have been met with the incident again this time, but I knew it was going to be a big problem. The biggest problem though was that now we knew it wasn't an isolated incident.

Is this job really ok?

“Is anyone hurt?”

“No. We're all fine. How about you, SunbehOppa?”

“I hit my back and head a little hard but I think I'm ok now.”

“You sure you don't have to go to the hospital?”

Glasses girl walked up next to me and checked my head. Luckily I don't think I suffered a concussion, but there was a huge bump on the back of my head.

“Something like this will get better with just a couple days of rest. I don’t need to go to a hospital.”

“But still...”

I did have health insurance but I can only use it for big injuries. I pay about 2,000 a month so that I can have access to treatment no matter how much the bill is.

Since we now know that the irregular incident wasn’t a one time thing, keeping up the payments on my insurance would be necessary.

“It looks like it’s almost done.”

Han Jookseok said as he watched the rest of the dust crumble away. Only the wolf’s head was left and then soon, that too was gone.

Drop.

A skillbook had dropped to the ground.

Again?

“What!?”

Jung Sooah jumped up and grabbed the book before handing it to me.

“Take it.”

“Uh...do you need to be so loud?”

“You never know. There might be someone who might steal it and run.”

She whispered into my ear. True. There are a lot of cases of people taking skillbooks and running. But the way she was acting now was basically announcing to everyone on the team that she didn't trust them. If it were me, I could never do something like that.

Was she doing this to take the hate in my stead?

Everyone started crowding around me. Manager Kim pushed Jung Sooah and poked out his chin.

“What is it? What is it? What kind of skill? If it's a pro level skill then wouldn't it be worth like a couple million dollars?”

“Let's check first.”

Gulp.

I could hear someone swallowing. When I looked up, I saw Cho Youngoo staring at me with fire in his eyes. Looks like he's someone who can't hide his emotions very well.

“Hur..hurry.”

“Don't expect too much. It could be a low level one too.”

I said this, but it was true that I was expecting alot too. If it was over level 3, the price of it would be more than a million. Though we would do a contribution split, each person would still get more than 100k each.

Flip.

I opened to the first page.

Everyone collapsed to the ground.

“Friendship...? Wait. And it's only a level 0? Is there even such a thing?”

Sooah said with a sigh in her voice.

Everyone's expression was full of disappointment.

Except me.

\*\*\*

It was the second level o skillbook. The skill name was 'friendship'.

Slam.

I closed the skillbook and got up.

I should probably start the official procedure.

"Level o skillbook. It is 'friendship'. Is there anyone who would like to buy this skillbook?"

"Who would buy something like that? Unless they're stupid."

Manager Kim said with a sigh. His face looked like the face of someone who lost something very precious.

"Three of you have a skill already so you won't be needing this... Bae Yeonkyoung?"

"Ah. I don't need it either. I'm an archer. I would want a skill relevant to my ability though."

"Hm...then I guess we should just sell this..we might get about

3000

dollars for it.”

“That’s it?”

Jung Sooah asked.

“I had put up a level o skillbook a while back. BUt no one wanted to buy it. The only offers I got were around that price.”

“Nah. Really?”

“I’ll ask one more time. Anyone willing to buy it for 3000 dollars?”

Everyone started looking around at each other. As expected. There was no one who wanted a dumb sounding skill...and a level o one at that...for 3000 dollars.

Sooah kicked at the ground. Then she raised her hand.

“I’ll buy it.”

“You?”

Glasses girl asked with surprise.

“It’s good for a porter to have a skill. It would probably help to decrease my chance of dying. I don’t know what this is, but seeing as it’s a level 0...looks like it would suit a porter just fine.”

“I guess...”

Glasses girl started to nod as Sooah explained her thought process. Everything related to killing monsters started at level 1. Skill, Item, Dungeon. So it made sense that everyone believed a level 0 would have nothing to do with a hunter.

The contribution ranking came out as: me, Cho Youngoo, Han Joonseok, Bae Yeonkyoung, then manager Kim. Of course manager Kim raised a fuss.

“Why am I fifth! I should at least be second! No...even third!”

“I’m a person too.”

At my words, manager Kim shut up. While everyone else had come together to save my life after I risked it to let them escape, he was the only one who hid. There was no way I would rank him any higher just because he didn’t run away.

“I...I told you to run away!”

“That’s true. But it’s also true that you didn’t help when we were

trying to kill the monster.”

“Shit! That’s not fair! If it wasn’t for me, do you think we would have cleared the dungeon?”

“No we wouldn’t have.”

“Then you shouldn’t be ranking in this way!”

“But if anyone else had not been there, I would have died today.”

I said this as I looked to all the party members.

Cho Youngoo, Han Joonseok, Bae Yeonkyoung, Jung Sooah.

They had all gone up against a boss class monster just to save my life.

I knew that it was the right thing to do to make sure they were rewarded for it.

“Keu...”

Manager Kim put his head down after trying to say something..but changing his mind.”

“I will make sure you get more than enough contribution pay. Do



you have anything to add?”

“Ye..yes.”

“What is it?”

“Will you call me again next time?”

Manager Kim asked. I nodded my head and Jung Sooah said.

“Manager Kim. It looks like you do have a conscience.”

“What you brat? Do you think I don’t have any pride at all?”

There was no one who responded to that.

\*\*\*

When I opened my eyes, I saw the familiar ceiling. I went to my fridge and got a glass of water to drink.

Gulp. Gulp.

“You’re awake?”

“Cough. Cough.”

I heard Jung Sooah's voice behind me. I tried to remember what happened...ahh. After the hunt, we all went to a small restaurant to get dinner. The last thing I recalled was getting drunk, and Jung Sooah taking me into a cab.

This was all because manager Kim was drinking so hard that I ended up joining in. That old man.

“Aren't you going home?”

“I was tired so I just went to bed. Why? I can't do that?”

“You should ask first before just doing something like that on your own.”

“Haha.”

“Don't laugh. I just might get used to you.”

Jung Sooah got up and washed her face to wake up. Then she padded on over to the kitchen to start making some ramen.

“Two?”

“Three.”

“Coming up.”

I helped set the table, and we ate the ramen quietly. When I finally realized that we were doing everything so naturally with any awkwardness, it was already too late.

“But why were you asking us to buy that?”

“Because it’s worth it.”

“You’re going to give me back my money right?”

“I’ll think about it.”

“Chi. Really. You think 3000 just grows on trees?”

“You’re rich though. Remember the 50,000 you got from me?”

“I’ll be using it as my dowry. Should I just sell this damn thing?”

“Why? It’ll be such a waste. Learn it.”

“What? Me? Why? I won’t need it though.”

I wonder what kind of skill ‘friendship’ will prove to be?

# Chapter 26

---

“Learn it anyway. It’s better than not having a skill at all.”

“Then you really bought this for me to learn?”

“You’ll probably thank me later.”

Jung Sooah was lost in deep thought. This was a skillbook worth a couple thousand dollars. She was wrestling the idea of whether she should sell it or learn it.

“I’ll learn it.”

“So you’ve decided?”

“Yeah. I’m sure there must be a reason why you want me to learn it...so I’ll do it.”

“Well, the skill that I learned is a level 0 too.”

“Oh...didn’t you say that you put it up on the market?”

“It didn’t sell.”

“Then your physical ability must be because of that skill..”

“I got more upgrades than that...”

“So you can get even more powerful?”

I nodded my head and she began digging into the backpack for the skillbook. She brought out a thin paperback looking book and stared at me with a frown after looking at the weird words.

“What the heck...what language is this...?”

“I don’t know either. It was the first time I ever saw anything like it when I saw it in mine. But when I just read it, it popped into my head. Even though I didn’t know the meaning still.”

“Hm...I see. Are all skillbooks like this?”

“Nope. From what I hear, all the other skillbooks are written so people can understand it. But if you keep reading it, you’ll learn it. Oh...wait.”

I remembered one thing. But she was in the zone and didn’t hear me. I didn’t want to break her concentration. If I broke it, the skillbook might end up disappearing before she could fully gain the skill.

Flash!

A burst of light exploded out of the book.

A moment later. I saw Jung Sooah's head collapsed into the empty ramen bowl. She must have fainted just like I had done. I passed out for about 10 days...the same would probably be true for her.

“This annoying girl...”

It would have been fine if it was just one day...but if she ended up missing for 10 days, her family would probably file for missing persons. The problem was, I didn't know where this girl lived. I tried to look through her phone, but there was a passcode on it. Arg.

All I could do was wait for a call to come through.

I cleaned off the remnant ramen soup off her face and placed her on the bed. Since she would be out for so long, I couldn't let her lay on the ground. I don't know if it was because she was so muscular, but she was pretty heavy for a girl.

I cleaned up a bit and went on the internet. I wanted to see what happened with the irregular event from yesterday. But there was nothing out of the norm. There wasn't even one line of news referring to an irregular.

Then that means it only happened at the Baekoonsa dungeon?

I guess it's not impossible. Because irregulars had appeared once

in a blue moon before that incident. That one incident was the only time irregulars had popped up all over the country. It seems the Baekoonsa irregular was an isolated one this time.

But I still had some questions.

Why did the irregular appear at the same time the level o skillbook did. If these two events happened independent of eachother, I would have crossed it off as nothing out of the ordinary. But for them to happen at the same time...it couldn't be chance.

“Hmm...”

Click. Click.

I clicked the mouse while thinking.

Level o skillbook. Irregular.

What was the meaning of these two?

I went into the hunter market. I went to check if there was anyone trying to sell a level o skillbook.

No one.

From my experience, it would seem that the drop probability of a level 0 skillbook were high. I mean, I had hunted just twice and both times I got a level 0 skillbook. Even if I had ridiculously good luck, there should have been at least 1 level 0 skillbook up on the market.

Or maybe level 0 skillbooks drop only for me?

Nah. It's probably all in my head.

\*\*\*

There were no calls for her over the next 10 days. I guess she was just as much of a loner as I was.

“Water!”

Sooah drank a crapload of water as soon as she woke up. When she finished off an entire 2 liter bottle of water, she stared at me dumbly and said.

“Hungry.”

“Jesus.”

She finally seemed to get it together after eating a piece of bread and two ramens. Then she said to me.



“Ha? Did I eat too much?”

“Yes. You even ate my share.”

“I’m sorry. I’ll make you food.”

“It’s fine. More than that, how do you feel?”

“Eum...now that you ask, what happened? Last thing I remember is reading the skillbook.”

“You fell asleep while learning the skill.”

“How long?”

“Ten days.”

“Haaa?”

“Didn’t I tell you last time? That I fell asleep for days while learning my skill.”

“You were telling the truth then? I thought you were making that up after ignoring my calls.”

“I don’t lie unless it makes me money.”

“Wow. Ten days.”

She checked the time on her phone then suddenly whipped her head to face me.”

“Did you by any chance do any naughty things to me while I was asleep?”

“No.”

“You should have.”

“Don’t think so little of my honor. You brat.”

Tap.

“Ow. Why’d you hit me.”

“Be thankful I’m just letting you off with this. Anyway, you should check for your skill, no?”

There was no information on her new friendship skill. We just needed to find out if she actually got the skill properly by having her close her right eye.

“I just see two zeros.”

“One is your level and one is your proficiency. Since you only have two numbers, it seems you don’t get any reward points...then could it be a skill you have to activate? I guess it could also be a passive skill.

“Explain please.”

“I’m saying I don’t know what it is. We need to figure it out slowly.”

“Is it going to be useful though?”

“You don’t trust me?”

“I trust you. Almost too much.”

She said this and followed up with a big sigh.

Why is she sighing like that?

\*\*\*

Now that she was awake, I made a round of calls to all the members of the party. Even though they had all experienced the dangers of an irregular, all of them responded to my summons. Most likely none of them were able to find any other job and were doing nothing at home.

We decided to go to Baekoonsa dungeon once more. The deciding factor was because of the cheap admission fee and because we were used to it. We were a bit worried about an irregular appearing again, but you couldn't be a hunter without taking on that kind of a risk.

That didn't mean we shouldn't be prepared. Just in case, I packed some chains and pepper bombs.

The raid was going well. We fought against wolves, goblins, kobolds, and even ran into a rare slime monster. But everyone did their job, and every monster died easily against my blade – so we were getting through the dungeon fairly quickly.

“It's way easier than the last time we came.”

Glasses girl nodded her head with a grin. I answered back.

“Thanks to manager Kim doing so well.”

“Hm. Who said I ever skimmed on my job.”

“Naah. It's not because of manager Kim. It's thanks to our party head being so good at attacking.”

Cho Youngoo said with a small smirk. Seeing that the ever prideful manager Kim didn't say anything to that, it seemed all of

them thought I was pretty strong.

My level up in focus helped in one other area aside from having stronger reflexes. I was able to fight and get rid of the enemy one by one before they could even start attacking.

Since my fights all started with going up against one enemy and then the next, winning was that much easier.

But even taking that out of consideration, there was something else that made my battles so ridiculously easy. I turned at looked to Jung Sooah. Could it be because of the 'friendship' skill?

I went to her and said.

“Check your skill.”

“Hm...it went up one.”

“Is it because of that?”

“You mean the monster being weak?”

“It might just be that we got stronger.”

Every single one of our party's abilities had increased. The one who got noticeably stronger was glasses girl. In the last raid, she

was able to hit her mark 1 out of 4 times, but she was not able to hit 1 out of 3 times. You could say that she got better in the 10 days, but if that were possible then she wouldn't have been suffering all this time. From what I knew, she was a crappy archer for the longest time.

“Now that you mention it, I feel like I got a bit stronger.”

She said while she pointed to her bag. She had about 12 ores in her backpack. It was probably over 130 kg, but she didn't look like she was breaking a sweat at all.

“That could be true. A passive skill that increases the teammates' abilities...it's definitely a worthwhile skill.”

“Oh. Then shouldn't you give me more distribution money?”

“I'll give you something extra from my share this time.”

# Chapter 27

---

If Jung Sooah's friendship skill had really raised everyone's ability, then it was only right to acknowledge this in the contribution rankings. The only thing was, there was no way for us to really measure how much it helped..and the skill wasn't discussed with everyone at the start so I would have to do the rankings normally this one time.

"Anyway, do you know how the skill activates?"

"Hm. I'm not sure. But I think I might know. It's a weird feeling. Is a skill supposed to feel like that?"

"Just because you learn a skill doesn't mean you discover everything about it instantly. Think about someone who gains a boxing skill. If you asked them to explain exactly how to punch and step in words, would they be able to explain it? No. Because they just acquired the skill instantly without physically doing the work and uncovering it themselves."

"That makes sense."

"So they would need to do some tests. To learn how to punch, they need to test some punches..to learn how to dodge, they need to test evading a punch."

"Then everyone else learns their skills by testing it like this too?"

“No. Usually there is a known way to use the skill. It’s been already 50 years since the first skillbook appeared. Most skillbooks have alot more of the same kind out there, so people usually already know how to activate or use it.”

“So you’re saying there isn’t really a guideline for mine.”

“There isn’t one for mine either.”

“Oh. Feels like we hit some kind of jackpot or something.”

“Let’s get going.”

Han Joonseok said as he got up. It seemed our break ran a little too long. We had finished clearing about half the dungeon and the left trail – we only have the right trail left to clear.

We had packed everything up and were getting ready to continue when we heard a voice coming down from the entrance.

“Over there! Stop what you’re doing and everyone come on out!”

Everyone looked in the direction the voice was coming from. We could now see someone in military uniform yelling and waving his arms about at us.

“I said come out! You can’t hear me?”



“What...?”

“Why is someone not in our party in the dungeon?”

Half of the party looked at me, confused, while the other half frowned. This was the difference between the experienced and novices.

“Let’s listen to what that man is saying.”

“What? Why? We still have time left.”

Glasses girl said. I could see why she was annoyed. Dungeons operate where each session is reserved at 4 hours. Since we were here, we could lay claim to remaining here until our time ran out.

By normal procedure this was true. By normal procedure.

I waved my arms to let the military man know we understood. I saw him nod his head and disappear again.

I faced the party members and tried explaining it to them after seeing their bafflement.

“There are a lot of instances where things like this happen in a dungeon. This is called a booking change and...”

“Booking change my butt. It’s a rip off – jumping the queue, is what it is.”

Jung Sooah said.

“Jumping the queue?”

“Eh...so. What it is is. There are people who are um...higher than us...waiting to come in.”

At Han Joonseok’s answer, manager Kim responded.

“So we have to leave then? Didn’t we pay the normal admission fee?”

“They do give us some of that back. But we can’t expect anything more than that.”

Han Joonseok’s face turned red in an instant.

“Wait. Do they realize how much of a pain it is to get ready and come out altogether for a raid? It’s not as if we can come back any time soon if we leave right now!”

“So?”

Manager Kim said with a snort.

“..I’m sorry?”

“So what are you saying you’re going to do about it? Are you going to go and tell them you won’t leave?”

“Of course.”

“This is why amateurs are amateurs. Chet.”

“Aren’t you being a bit rude?”

“Rude! Am I saying anything wrong!”

“Dungeons are operated by the government.”

I interrupted them just as they were about to go at each other.

“There are about 50 groups who can put pressure on the team that operates a dungeon, of which include: entrepreneurs, lawmakers, and other senior officials of the ministry. Very rarely, sometimes a raid team could also have that kind of power.”

“So. If someone with power wants to do a hunt, we just have to bow out like that?”

Han Joonseok still couldn’t accept it. But I liked these kinds of

people. People who rage against the unfair and unjust. If we wanted anything to change for the better, we needed more people like this.

“Yes. If we cause any problems over something like this, we could get blacklisted. That list is...”

“Put up in their database and distributed to all dungeons.”

Sooah finished.

“Then...”

“At the very least, it would be hard for you to find any hunting jobs in all of South Korea.”

“So they’re saying, ‘You people with no connections can just shut up as do as we say.’ Got it?”

“Why do you keep taking their sides since the beginning? You think you’re anything special?”

Han Joonseok asked.

“This bastard. Who said I’ve been taking their side...!”

“Let’s get going.”

I tried to break it up and get everyone back on task. Any fighting can be continued outside. Since it came to it, it was better to leave earlier than later. Though it wasn't much, we were able to get some ores so it wasn't a complete waste and we could always come back next time.

We couldn't say we were losing out on too much because the dungeon operators would usually get us a earlier reservation slot for our troubles.

As soon as we left the dungeon, we spied a couple youngsters standing by. They were probably mid twenties at the most. Surprisingly, I knew one of them.

“That person...”

Sooah pulled on my arm cuffs. One of them was pretty big. He was one of the guys that had tried to violate Sooah at the Ansan dungeon. He recognized me as soon as I recognized him.

I think his name was Park Jungbeh.

He made a great big smile as he sauntered over to me.

“Perfect timing. Let's go have a talk. Ha? The girl from last time is here too?”

“Ah...yes.”

“Are the two of you going out?”

Park Jungbeh asked coyly. I started to wonder if there was something wrong with my memory. Then I wondered just how stupid these guys were.

He wouldn't be smiling like that unless he were stupid or retarded.

When I shrugged it off, he continued.

“The porter that was supposed to meet us here bailed on us. So why don't you porter for us a bit. If that girl over there comes, it would be even better.”

“We're on our way from doing a round in the dungeon so it would be difficult for us.”

“Heyy. Don't be so stiff. Aren't we pals? If it's because of the incident from last time, I'll apologize. Honestly, we only did it because of Hansol so don't take it so personally. I'm not a bad guy, really. And if we were to really be truthful, it's not like you were all perfect either. Don't you know that I almost died because of you. So let's just let bygones be bygones. What do you think?”

I thought it was just Song Hansol who was the crazy bastard, but it seems this guy had a few screws loose himself. How is it that he

can be so self-absorbed? I almost got goosebumps when he complimented himself saying how he's not a bad guy.

"I'm truly sorry. Maybe next time."

"Are you really going to be like this?"

"More than that, aren't leisure parties against the law at this time..."

"Ah. That? Don't worry. I got a memo saying it's fine."

He was talking about a waiver that said that the country would not be liable if the signer died in the dungeon.

"We'll wait for you to finish with your other group. We only have 4 in our party so if both you and the girl came, it would be just perfect. So we'll assume you'll be joining us and wait. We'll give you thirty minutes."

This bastard was not going to let it go. If we keep insisting on not joining, it could really end up becoming more troublesome for me.

"Ok."

Plus I had something I wanted to try out. It could be really dangerous so it might be better to try it out with these guys than my own party. We'll see.

# Chapter 28

---

After auctioning the ores, I finished up the contribution split. I gave Sooah a bit more from my share and sent her home with everyone else. No use in having her come along. Park Jungbeh glanced behind me and said in an almost disappointed voice.

“You didn’t bring that lady with you?”

“She said she had a previous engagement so I couldn’t do anything but let her go.”

“Hm. I guess nothing we can do. I wanted to compensate her well since that incident from last time and all..”

“I will let her know that you were sorry.”

“Nah. You don’t need to do that.”

I was used to gauging people. A person can cover up a lie with pretty words and how they acted but it was hard to lie with your eyes. I could tell from this guy’s eyes that he was telling the truth. He was probably being honest when he said that he was sorry.

But that didn’t mean shit. A man who beats his wife probably regrets it too after the fact. Killers are known to cry over what they have done too. But if they were put into the same position again, would they truly act differently?



Park Jungbeh was the type of person who could and would act on those same urges if given the opportunity. He might get hung up over it after he did it. But I'm sure after a couple days passes, he would feel just fine.

I just needed to remember one truth. That guy had tried to kill me. It might be just a small hiccup in his life, but it was a big deal to me.

Including me, the party was made up of five people. Park Jungbeh's abilities were not too spectacular. He did have some high defense armour that was a level 2 but his weapon and skill were both level 1. The rest of his crew were pretty much the same.

After we entered the dungeon, I walked up to Park Jungbeh and asked him.

"Why did you decide to do a general party? If you just waited a little bit longer, I'm sure they would have allowed leisure parties again."

"What does it matter? A leisure party and a general party are the same thing."

"I guesss..."

The difference between a general party and a leisure party was just the fact that one didn't have to sign a waiver and the other did. If you didn't want to sign the waiver, you had to prove that you

had the skills and equipment to ensure you would be safe in the dungeon.

In the case that you don't meet the requirements, you could also pay an additional fee to have them call on an extra person as security to help you through it safely. A general party didn't have such restrictions. Since general parties sign the waivers, the dungeon operators don't really pay too much attention to them – since they would not be held accountable for whatever happened.

On the one hand, if you were strong enough, then that meant you would be able to clear a dungeon safely even in a general party. The only problem was, there were always outliers.

The same applied for these guys. They were probably just thinking of me as a porter so they were assuming they could clear the dungeon with just a four person crew.

If nothing out of the ordinary happened, this would be true. Big if.

Three goblins appeared, signaling the start of our hunt. Park Jungbeh, a tanker, and two short range attackers rushed forward. The remaining guy was probably a magic user. This guy raised a staff and yelled out.

“Magic missile!”

A blue light shot out from the end of that staff. Seeing as there

were three streaks, it was a level 1 magic missile.

Pow! Pow! Pow!

All three bursts hit their mark. Caught unawares, they were struck down by the fierce and quick attacks. This was our chance.

The cooltime for a magic missile was short – about 30 seconds. There was a reason why it was considered a top skill among the level 1 skills.

The battle went very smoothly from there. We had Park Jungbeh, who wore armor that was unpierceable by level 1 monsters, 2 close range attackers, and the mage who threw out the magic missile. The monsters of the Baekoonsa dungeon could not do anything against them.

We were resting after they had cleared the entire dungeon in less than 2 hours. I say 2 hours, but the time it actually took to kill all the monsters (not including the walking time) was about 20 minutes.

All I did was pick up the dropped ores and carry it in my bag.

“How many did we get?”

“21 in all.”

“Not bad.”

“If we were to auction it off, it would probably end up being about 20,000 dollars after all the fees. Since there were only four in the party, each person could end up with about 5,000 dollars each. This could be considered a pretty good haul. The danger level was pretty low and the return pretty high. This was exactly why hunter grade equipment and skills were so darn expensive.

I raised my head and stared up at the ceiling.

“But didn’t we kill all the monsters?”

“It seems so. Why?”

“The dungeon isn’t clearing.”

I raised a finger and pointed up. The dungeon was still dark.

“Ah....you’re right. What the...”

“Maybe...”

I trailed off. I could hear the blood draining from Park Jungbeh’s face.

“Hey. Get up right now!”

“What’s wrong?”

“Why? Let’s just rest a bit more.”

“Stop yammering and get up. Can’t you tell there’s something wrong right now?”

“What are you saying is wrong? Jeez.”

“The damn dungeon isn’t clearing right now! It’s an irregular!”

“What the hell are you saying. Wasn’t it you who said that this dungeon was safe. You said an irregular has never shown up here before. So why are you saying there’s an irregular now!”

“I don’t know. We just need to get the hell out of here!”

Park Jungbeh’s voice began to shake. He had faced an irregular before. It was understandable that he would be scared shitless unlike these other guys who have never crossed one’s path before.

\*\*\*

During the 10 days that Sooah had been knocked out, there were some things I hypothesized.

1. An irregular and the 0 level skillbook...the two had some kind of correlation.
2. An irregular appears when a specific condition is satisfied

I tried to think back on all three times an irregular appeared and compared them. Then I compared it to the time I hunted with Eum Hyunjoon's party when an irregular didn't appear. There were some similarities.

Level 0 skillbook. Fast clear time. 5 person party.

I wondered if an irregular would appear if the three conditions were satisfied again. Of course this was all just speculation at this point. I could probably just shake it off as coincidence. But it could also not be mere coincidence either.

I chose to believe the latter.

The next thing I had to think about was what to do next to get out of here. But we also needed to establish if there really was an irregular.

"Let's start heading toward the entrance for now."

I shouldered my backpack and got up. The rest of the group seemed like they still didn't understand the gravity of the situation. That is...until they saw the wolf boss blocking our way out.

A wolf boss. Not bad. It could have been worse. We might have

ended up facing the level 4 monster I faced when I made my first kill. I had been preparing myself for that.

“What is this? Isn’t that a cave wolf? But why the heck is it so big?”

“It’s a dungeon boss.”

At my response, everyone stared at me. If it were any other situation, they probably would have told me to shut up and just do my portering, but it seemed they were desperate to have something to rely on at this perilous situation.

“You’ve seen it before?”

Park Jungbeh asked.

“I did. Once.”

“Do you know how to kill it?”

“Not sure. All I could remember is running like hell away from it.”

“Shit. Useless.”

“What did you expect from a porter? Let’s start thinking of a plan

to get out of here.”

“Can’t we just fight it?”

The mage asked.

“Against that? You might just be doing some spells behind us so you don’t care but we...”

“It’s impossible. Yeah we have armour...but it won’t last long against that thing.”

These guys have only fought against monsters smaller than themselves. They could not imagine fighting against a monster two times bigger and two times stronger than they were.

When the atmosphere seemed ripe enough, I jumped in.

“There is one option...”

Everyone’s face changed in an instant.

“What...what option is that?”

“It’s a little bit dangerous though..”

“Anything’s fine so come out with it.”



At Park Jungbeh's words, I responded as if I had no choice but to say. This option would be the same one I had used that last time.

"Someone needs to lead the wolf into the left trail so the rest can run away...I don't think it would be too difficult..."

As soon as Park Jungbeh responded, everyone decided to put in their two cents too.

"True...but who's going to be the bait?"

"I'm slow so I can't. Maybe if we were up against a goblin or a kobolt...but a wolf is way too fast."

"You weren't thinking of making a mage be the bait were you?"

"I can't because my armor is way too heavy."

Everyone naturally turned to look at me. Park Jungbeh made a big smile and said.

"Yeh. Didn't you say that you ran away from this kind of monster once before? Why don't you lead it away? We'll call for help as soon as we get out."

"Yeh, yeh. That seems like it would be best."

“In trade, we’ll give you all the ores in that bag.”

Seeing a great opportunity to use me as a scapegoat, they all circled around me to try and persuade me to be the bait. I almost laughed aloud because they were acting exactly as I had imagined... no...hoped they would. Instead of answering, I stared at Park Jungbeh. He was holding my hand and saying with a soft voice.

“Please. You’re the only one we can trust with this task.”

“...but it’s too hard for me to bait that monster all by myself. I wouldn’t be able to run too far from it...and I won’t last even 10 seconds against it once it reaches me.”

I responded as if I were truly conflicted. I needed to play hard to get.

“Shit! Then what the hell do you want us to do! It’s not as if we can do it!”

Park Jungbeh yelled out as he jumped up angrily. I pretended to be surprised and placed my finger on his lips.

“Please be more quiet. What will you do if the wolf decides to come after us this instant.”

“Chet...”

He shut up with a frown at my words. These guys could die or live...and the choice was mine to make. Their lives were literally in the palm of my hand.

Park Jungbeh said with a gloomy expression.

“I’ll do whatever you want. Tell me. What is it that you need.”

Finally. What I was waiting for. I pretended to ponder of this for a bit and carefully said.

“To start. I need something to protect me against that monster’s attacks.”

I said this as I glanced briefly at Park Jungbeh’s armor. I could see his face immediately harden. That armor was probably about 500,000 dollars. I was curious. Would he give it to me?

“That’s...”

“I don’t want to die either.”

“This bastard! Do you know how much this is!...”

“Shh. The wolf might hear us.”

“Chet...”

He shut up again and sat down. I stared at Park Jungbeh as if I had all the time in the world.

\*\*\*

Now. How much is your life worth to you. I wonder...hehe

## Chapter 29

---

Everyone waited for Park Jungbeh to respond with bated breath. I wonder how much time passed. He finally said.

“Ok...but if you make it out alive, I’m going to get it back.”

“I can’t promise that.”

“...what?”

“I’m risking my life to do this. I would only consider doing it with something like that in return.”

“This bastard...”

Squeeze!

Park Jungbeh grabbed a hold of my collar. When I stared back at him as if I didn’t have a care in the world, his stare wavered a bit.

“This bastard. You bastard. Do you really want to die? Should I kill you right here and now?”

“I guess that’s one option. But if I die right now, who’s going to be your bait?”

I pointed my chin at everyone. Everyone was staring at Park Jungbeh. If I die, then I'm sure they would all kill Park Jungbeh for ruining their only hope of survival. I was sure that their relationship was just as superficial as the one he had with Song Hansol. This meant that they would do what was best for themselves. They could care less about even Park Jungbeh if it meant they could live.

“Keuk...”

The hand that was holding my collar began to shake. His other hand was wavering near his scabbard. I'm sure he wanted to stab and kill me right then and there. Of course I wouldn't be still if he really did draw his sword but I highly doubt he would do something like that with his life in the balance.

Then he finally let me go.

Luckily he wasn't a total idiot.

“Shit.”

He took off his armor and handed it over to me. Seeing how his hand was still shaking quite a bit, he must have hated having to do this. I don't blame him. It's the same as just giving away 500,000 dollars.

“Satisfied? Hurry up and do your thing now.”

As soon as I put it on, Park Jungbeh got up and started poking me to hurry up. I only made a big smile and said.

“But I’m not done yet.”

“What?”

“If I have to fight it, Lord forbid, won’t I need a weapon?”

“You little shit! What the hell are you saying!”

Park Jungbeh couldn’t take any more and was screaming at the top of his lungs. It was getting dangerous. At this noise level, the wolf was sure to hear.

This time I got mad for real and said.

“Do you all want to die? Is that it? What are you trying to do by yelling so loud?”

“Shit. What else do you need?”

“Didn’t I just tell you?”

I pointed to the sword that Park Jungbeh was holding. From the looks of it, it didn’t seem like anything special. Compared to the bloodysword, it was really just a general 1 level sword. But it was

still worth over 100,000. Park Jungbeh's face became red. Really red.

“This...this too?”

“Yes. It's necessary.”

“Hey. Just hand it over. It's better than dying right?”

Seeing the situation being drawn out, his party tried to have him comply asap.

“These bastards...just because it's not happening to you guys...”

“What will it be?”

I urged him. Then finally, as if he had given up on it all, he handed over his sword.

“You better make it. You piece of shit.”

I could hear that he meant it.

I took the sword and pulled out my phone.

“What is it now.”



“I just want to record some things.”

I had zero faith in his “word”. I needed evidence.

\*\*\*

“Until the wolf enters the left trail, do NOT come out. No matter what sounds you hear, ignore it. Do you understand?”

“Yeh. We get it.”

After I had Park Jungbeh and his party go into the right trail, I handed over my specialty bomb made up of a mix of red and black peppers.

“What is this?”

“Pepper bomb. This is for you since you gave me your armor and weapon. If I happen to mess up, this pepppper bomb will save your life.

“Shit. If you run away or something then I’m going to get you. Got it?”

“How can I run away when it’s blocking the exit?”

When I made an exasperated face, everyone else in the party tried to put in a word to appease me.

“Yeh. Don’t be so suspicious. That bastard is putting his life on the line right?”

“Later when we all get out, I’ll reward you big time. If portering is too hard for you, I can even hire you at our company. Just ask. If you want it, I can make you a manager...no a director even.”

“Well, I’ll just give you your own company. Is there anything else you need? I’ll get you anything you want.”

Must be nice. To have so much money.

“Don’t worry. I will do my best and bait it so you can get out safely.”

As if making me director wasn’t enough...they were even offering to give me my own company...how generous of them. Ha. There are so many good people in the world...so why is it such a shithole? As if.

I shouldered my backpack and carefully walked towards the exit where the wolf was. Luckily, the wolf wasn’t aware of us even after Park Jungbeh had screamed so many time. I could now see its head. I hid behind a nearby boulder, put down my back, and took inventory of my new equipment.

Level 2 armor and a weapon. One level 1 weapon. Two pepper bombs. Special high-strength 30 meter chain. This chain was used as a snow chain on the tires of vehicles over 1 ton. Unlike normal chains, it was relatively light and much stronger.

I carefully unwound the chain and started to tie it on the stalactites. Since the last raid, I had prepared a scenario in case something like it ever happened again. I thought to myself...is there another way to take care of the wolf without having to run around like a crazy person?

My solution was in the wolf's hugeness. It was two times the size of a normal human. I probably came up to its shoulder and it was probably 3 meters and 50 centimeters in length. Taking into account its sheer size, I could probably tie up the chains in a way to prevent it from being able to get out of a certain area. Of course it could be strong enough to just break the chains.

So I took that into account too. Its strength mainly comes from it being so big and heavy. The heaviest wolf is the Alaskan Tundra wolf that weights about 47 kilograms. If I were to use that as my reference point, then I'd have to say this boss wolf didn't weigh more than 200 kilograms.

This chain should be enough.

“Whew.”

I dusted my hands off. I had cobwebbed the chains to block off the passage way. The biggest hole was probably about 1 meters.

Because the chain was short, I couldn't do anything about that but this would work. It was just big enough for me to easily slip through while it would be hard for the wolf to do so.

I set my backpack behind the chains, put on the armor, and picked up Park Jungbeh's sword. It was just your run of the mill longsword. But it was sharper than any manmade sword so if you even placed a finger on it...you would have to go straight to the hospital.

“Whew.”

I made a light sigh and walked to the wolf.

The wolf quickly got up from where it was laying and stared at me. I could see an almost madness in its red eyes. Its grey fur was almost standing straight up.

Since I wasn't here to talk to a monster, I'll stop my observation of it here.

“Hey you! Eat this!”

I yelled out and threw my pepper bomb at it.

As soon as it was in the air, the wolf immediately bit at it out of reflex.

The bomb exploded in its mouth. I could see peppery smoke coming out of its mouth and nose. Seeing as how it was almost tripping over its own legs, I could call that phase a success.

A moment later, after getting a hold of itself, it stepped out of the smoke. When I saw that it was in pounce position, I turned around and started running like hell.

It was fast. It caught up right behind me in mere moments. But I wasn't slow either. In this terrain, the monster's speed and my speed were almost the same. I would make it to the area I had crisscrossed the chains at. When I looked back, I saw that it was only about 10 meters behind me now.

I threw my body through the 1 meter hole. Luckily, I didn't get hung up and passed through safely without a hiccup.

But the wolf, which was twice my size, didn't have the same luck. It got snagged in the cobweb of chains and could not untangle it self. Only its head was able to pass through the hole...and its shoulder was stuck. It started putting all its weight into trying to get unstuck.

Though I did tie it up as tightly as I could, you never know what could happen if the monster kept shaking around like it was doing. I pulled out my bloodsword from my hip and slowly approached it.

The dungeon boss bared its fangs and tried to bite at me. A barking dog isn't to be feared. Ah. Was that not it? Oh well.

Stab.

“GRAAAWR!”

The wolf's cry could be heard ringing throughout the entire dungeon. You don't suppose everyone'll come running here after hearing that noise...do you? Because that would ruin everything...

# Chapter 30

---

The wolf could do nothing to stop the bloodsword from slurping up its blood. It kept baring its sharp fangs at me in anger and obvious duress, but the chain was even stronger than I had hoped. I wonder how many people knew there was such a simple and easy way to take care of a monster like this. I sure know I didn't until now.

Stab Stab!

Seeing the wolf trying to bite into the restraining chains, I took my new sword out and poked him a couple sides into his middle. Though I was sure now that he wasn't strong enough to break free of his bonds, I wanted to make sure he didn't snap them with his teeth. Better safe than sorry because the cave wolves are known for their tremendous biting strength...good not to underestimate that.

When I kept stabbing at him with Park Jungbeh...oh excuse me... MY sword, the wolf now tried to move backwards out of the hole, instead of through it. But there would be nowhere for it to go but to the mouth of the cave. I kept glancing at my watch, waiting for the time to run out.

I recall that last time, it had taken about 2 minutes for my sword to drink up almost every last drop. Since I couldn't be sure, I decided it would be best to wait 5 minutes.

Beep.

The timer I had set for 5 minutes went off. I went through the chain and walked to the front and saw a collapsed mound that was the wolf. I pulled out a pepper bomb from my pocket and threw it at the heap.

Even as the pepper smoke plumed into the air, I remained alert. Since it was a mixture of red pepper and black pepper, no matter how hard it tried to play dead, it would not be able to handle it. I think. Once I confirmed the wolf remained ever motionless, I held out my longsword and carefully padded forth.

“Ahem!”

I purposely cleared my throat loudly, but the wolf remained still. I kept my distance as far away from the monster as I could and reached over to try and poke at its eye with my sword.

“Grawr!”

The wolf jumped towards me, jaws wide, as if it was waiting for just this moment. But I had been expecting it this whole time so I kept my cool. I plunged my sword right into its open mouth.

The wolf dropped to its side, throwing up black blood and shivering as it lay on the ground. That should do it. If it got up again this time, I would bet my life it wasn't a wolf but a damn zombie.

[+1000]



Finally. Those sweet green digits appeared above the monster's head. The same amount as last time. With this, I should have over 4,000 reward points in all. Now I knew what people meant when they said they felt full even without having eaten a thing. I felt content.

I pulled out my bloodysword from the dead wolf's side. There was barely any blood seeping out of the wound, as expected, and there was now a black tint to the sword. Just how much blood did it drink for it to be so dark? Jeez.

I placed the bloodysword back on my hip and, before the monster could evaporate, I wiped off the longsword onto its fur. I needed to take care of this so I could sell it later. Unless it was broken or something, there was rarely any case where an item's value would depreciate, so I could expect 100,000 for this.

As the wolf kept evaporating into dust..then into air..I walked over to the chains and started to collect them back into my backpack. I didn't think of recycling it again but I didn't want to leave it behind for Park Jungbeh and his crew to see and learn my now new trick. Of course those idiots wouldn't figure out what I used it for. But just in case.

After cleaning up, I went back to the wolf.

The wolf had dropped an item.

“What is this?”

I picked up the thing that dropped to the floor and examined it. It looked to be a roll of A4 sized papers tied with a string. I pulled on the string and unrolled the papers to check it out. Luckily, this time, I was able to read it.

‘Escape’

Ok. If I were to take the literal meaning of it, then maybe it was a way to escape this dungeon. I would guess that if I were to face a monster that was too ferocious, ripping up this paper would transport me to safety.

“Ha...I scored another jackpot didn't I?”

It wasn't a weapon or a skillbook but, since I have a bad habit of always meeting irregulars, this would seem to be something that would be very useful. If you looked at it in one way, it might even be more valuable than a high level equipment. And since there were 5 pieces of paper, that meant I could use it a total of 5 times.

Wait. No.

Now that I think about it, I would probably have to take into account each party member. As if I could escape by myself and ditch my party if an irregular shows up.

I couldn't do that even if it meant my life. So I guess it was the same as having just a one time use. And on top of that, if Jung

Sooah ever decided to join us then we would be one escape paper shy.

That kind of sucks, but it's still a great haul. If anything, what made it even more valuable was the fact that this has never before appeared at the hunter's market. First the level 0 skillbook and now this...something was up.

The raids that had been happening without any change these past 50 years were now going through a lot in a short time. But I don't mind at all. For a person who's all the way at the bottom like me, things can only go up from here.

\*\*\*

As soon as I left the dungeon, my eyes met with an all too familiar silhouette. When she saw my face, she made a great big sigh.

It was Jung Sooah.

“You're alive.”

“Didn't I personally take you to the bus and send you off?”

“I turned back around. I was worried.”

“Why.”

“I, I came too.”

Glasses girl peeked out her head from behind Jung Sooah. I lightly raised my brows and said.

“You are definitely big for a girl.”

“What, what are you saying? I’m a girl because I’m big!”

Jung Sooah yelled out as her face turned a red hue. I was talking about her size. Why is she talking about her boobs?

“I meant you’re big boned.”

“...”

“I meant you were big because I didn’t even notice Bae Yeongyoung hiding behind you.”

“...”

“Do you think I’m the type of guy who would look at a girl’s breasts the moment I step out of a dungeon?”

“Hm...so mean. Really.”

I should stop picking on her now.

Glasses girl said with a slightly red face too.

“Party head. But where did you get that armor?”

“It was a gift. It seemed there was someone very generous in that party.”

At my words, Jung Sooah began to poke at the armor before saying.

“Wait. Isn’t this Park Jungbeh’s?”

“Yep.”

“You’re saying that bastard gave this to you? As a present?”

“Some things happened. Anyway, let’s go home. I’d rather not stick around and bump into them.”

“Wa...wait.”

“Talk while we walk. While we walk.”

I left the dungeon with Jung Sooah and glasses girl in tow. As we left the Baekoonsa dungeon, I saw Han Joonseok and Cho Youngoo

waiting on stand by.

Jeez. Them too?

Han Joonseok came forward first and said.

“I felt like you were trapped into a crappy situation so I came back because I was worried. I thought I could maybe be at least a little help if something happened.”

“I made him come. Joonseok wanted to just leave but I forced him to come back with me.”

“Didn’t I tell you not to say anything stupid?”

“It seems I put an unnecessary burden on everyone.”

I couldn’t get why these people I’ve only met two times cared at all about my well being. Could this be the friendship skill at work? Or is it that they’re masochists and liked being in danger? I usually like to err on the side of caution and think of the worst case scenario. Maybe they thought I would keep them on board to breeze through dungeon clearings if they were nice to me. Who knows. But I decided to take their kindness at face value this time.

Now that we were all together again, we decided to go get something to eat as a group. It was a relief that manager Kim wasn’t here. If he were, then we would probably all be forced to drink like hell again.

“Ha ha ha! You guys weren’t thinking of drinking without me now were you?!”

Manager Kim appeared. Out of nowhere.

“Who the hell called manager Kim?”

There was no way this man came all on his own. Glasses girl raised her hand with a small smile.

“Um..I thought since we were all here...it would be nice to include everyone.”

And so we were off to drink like no tomorrow. Again. Thanks a lot manager Kim.

# Chapter 31

---

The next day, after waking up with a mean hangover, I got out a piece of paper to write down my skill level, proficiency, and reward points.

[0,5,5150]

Strength 50.

Endurance 50.

Reflexes 50.

Total Capacity 100.

After 50 percent, it was reasonable to think the next level up would put me at 100 percent. It wasn't the multiplication of leveling up that I had initially thought but I could live with this. I was determined to get each and every ability to its total capacity. I figured it the best idea to just focus on raising just one physical ability. It would probably help me more if I improved in all areas evenly.

I was able to work on my strength and endurance at the neighborhood gym. As soon as I raised them both to 100 percent, I saw that 2,000 reward points had been deducted.



Now I had 3,150 points left. I again worked on my strength. This time 1,500 points were deducted in trade for a 150% increase in strength. Simply, this meant I could carry a 500kg backpack without breaking a sweat. With this kind of strength, I could probably bend rebar and crush concrete with my fists.

1,650 left. I decided I would use the rest towards increasing my reflexes.

I called Jung Sooah and headed to the park. I waited 30 minutes until she finally appeared.

The reflex exercise was the same as what we did the last time. Jung Sooah threw the balls and I dodged them. It was simple, but produced the necessary results.

“What are you going to do about Park Jungbeh?”

She asked while throwing the balls.

“What do you what am I going to do?”

“I’m sure he’ll come after you to get his armor back!”

“He should be thanking his lucky stars he made it out alive.”

“Do you really think so?”

“Hey. Focus on throwing those balls.”

I grabbed the ball flying toward me in one hand and said as I stretched out my hips. But it seemed she couldn't stop from worrying.

“...Is it because of me?”

“What?”

“If you're being like this because of me then you don't have to. Because if I think that you might get hurt because of me...”

I threw the ball at her.

“Euk! What the hell?”

“Wake up. Why would you think I'd put myself in danger for you? If you don't fix that bad habit of thinking that everything revolves around you, you'll end up getting scammed by someone someday real soon.”

“So, so that's not it?”

“And I did all of that for a good reason. And it's not like I'm going to run into any real problems anyway.”

“What?”

“I got this in trade for saving his life. I even recorded him on top of having a couple witnesses so he can’t do anything to me legally.”

I just received what was rightly owed to me. Since I did what I needed to do, there was no reason for Park Jungbeh to come after me, really. If he ignores that and tries to forcefully take back the armor and sword, I’ll just cross that bridge when I get to it. No, I actually wish he would. Because then I would have good reason to give him a well deserved whooping.

“Well, if you say so. Then I’ll be throwing again. But seriously.”

The ball she threw bounced off the wall with a nice sound. Yep. That’s the speed I’m looking for.

\*\*\*

As we finished reflex training, Jung Sooah looked as if she would pass out from exhaustion. This was to be expected because the pitcher uses way more energy than someone who just has to evade the ball. On top of that, I already had my endurance at 100 percent. In any case, my reflexes were finally at 100.

At this point, even without any equipment, I should be good enough why my new physical ability to easily kill level 1 monsters. Instead of cutting into their hides, I could just snap their necks or simply hit them to cause the necessary damage to go in for the fatal

kill.

If I had just two level 2 equipment on top of this, I should be able to clear a level 2 dungeon just fine. But I decided I would stick with my current party – at least for the time being. It wasn't because I had any sentimental feelings for them or anything, it was for the reward points. The weaker the party, the more chances I would have to make the kills myself and collect the points.

Not only would I be able to get about 2,000 points for every dungeon we clear, if an irregular appears then I'll be able to try out my new upgrades. I'm sure if I had to face a wolf boss head on without any tricks, I'd be able to do it easily with the help of my team. And if we ever get into a pickle, we had the escape scroll. Everyone else can use it while I run away.

[0,9,650]

Alright. 650. I thought about what might be good to use this on, when I got an idea.

“Hey. Hit me.”

“What? Where?”

“Anywhere. Minus. The crotch area.”

“...what are you thinking?”

“Just do what I tell you to do. Come on.”

“I can’t just hit you with my hand...”

She shook the hand holding a ball.

“Why don’t I hit you with this?”

“Ah. Yeah sure. That could work.”

“Here I go.”

“Okay!”

Smack!

She threw the ball right into my face. Hard.

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine. Keep doing it.”

Smack!

“Euk.”

This time it hit my chin. Why the hell is she aiming for my face.

“Stop throwing it at just my face and throw it in other places too.”

“Whatever.”

Well, I don't have anyone else I can ask to do this for me. We kept training just like this as people passing by stared at us with strange looks. I guess I must have looked a bit crazy standing there and letting myself get hit.

Smack!

And in the next instant, the balls weren't hitting as hard. I yelled out.

“Why are you throwing so softly?”

“What. What. I'm not! I'm throwing super hard.”

“Really? Wait a second.”

“I closed my left eye and checked my stats.

[0,10,150]

500 points had been deducted.

“Yes!!!”

“I did it because you told me to but what the hell were we doing?”

“You can’t tell? Defense. I figured maybe I’ll get stronger if I kept getting hit.”

“Are you kidding me...you can do something like that too?”

“I guess so. But it feels like it didn’t upgrade as much as any of the other skills. “

Of course the pain did lessen. But humans have a weaker constitution than other living beings to start out with. Just because I increased my defense by 50%, I highly doubt that would be enough for me to have a strong enough body to not need any armor.

I realized I needed to invest much more reward points into defense so that I can be as strong as if I were wearing at least a level 1 armor.

This would take some time.

“Let’s call it a day.”

“Ha. You need to pay up alot for today. It feels like my arm’s just about to fall out of its socket.”

“Be quiet. 100 is plenty for just working 2 hours.”

“Chet. Scrooge.”

“Let’s start picking up the balls.”

Now that I was out of all my reward points, I needed to think of how to go on another raid. Since no one was hurt, we could technically go as early as tomorrow. And since we were bumped out of our reservation early, it should be fairly easy to get a spot. I guess I just need to contact everyone and see if they were up to it.

Ring-

While I was busy picking up the balls and planning the next raid in my head, my phone started ringing. When I checked the caller ID, it was Han Joonseok.

Why is he calling out of the blue?

“Hello?”



[Party head? Did you see the news just now?]

“What?”

What is this all about?

[10 minutes ago, all the level 1 dungeons in the country just disappeared. Everyone who happened to be in a dungeon at that time were transported out so there were no casualties or missing persons, but it seems any raids would be all but impossible for us anytime soon.]

“If all the level 1 dungeons disappeared then it’s not that it’ll be impossible for us anytime soon...it’ll be impossible for us forever....no?”

[Well, we should monitor the situation for now...but what is going on.]

Han Joonseok and Cho Yeongoo were just getting into the rhythm of being hunters but they were still beginners. Their equipment and skills were both still at level 1. You could say that if the level 1 dungeons were truly gone, any chance of them doing any more raids were up in smoke. Like I said earlier, you needed level 2 equipment to clear a level 1 dungeon safely...and you needed level 3 equipment to clear a level 2 dungeon safely. Anything less meant you were flirting with death. Our team was only able to clear the level 1 dungeons (and just barely at that) because of my level 0 skill – a bit of an anomaly

“I’ll see if I can find out some more info on this and call you back.”

As soon as I hung up, Jung Sooah asked.

“What were you talking about? What did you mean by all the level 1 dungeons are gone?”

“Exactly what I said. Let’s head on home first.”

I went back to my place with Sooah and turned on the computer. The internet was already in an uproar with this new turn of events. Because of the irregulars, raids had been reduced to nearly half its number...hurting our economy due to the lack of rare ores. Now that all the level 1 dungeons were just gone..things would become critical. Just what is going on?

## Chapter 32

---

“The level 1 dungeons had all disappeared from our nation in one fell swoop...does this make any sense?”

Jung Sooah asked incredulously after staring at the computer screen from beside me. It didn't make sense to me at all. Why would it disappear so suddenly after 50 years of staying right where it was?

“It is coming from left field but since it happened, it's not like we can do anything to change it just because it doesn't make sense to us. Do you think that's the natural order? First irregulars appear. Then all the dungeons disappear?”

“SunbehOppa. Are you saying that the two have something to do with one another?”

“I mean, doesn't it seem like too much of a coincidence? Irregulars suddenly popping up one after the other and level 0 skillbooks that no one has ever seen before appearing. Then out of nowhere the dungeons disappearing. There's no other way to explain all of this except that they have something to do with eachother.”

“What in the world do you think is going on?”

“Who knows. It's not as if someone actually created the dungeons and is doing things according to their whim. This is all supposed to be a natural phenomenon.”

After saying this, he felt as if he said something important. Natural phenomenon? Could he really say that the raid system was a natural order of things? It's true that it has been 50 years since the monsters and dungeons appeared so it all seemed natural. But it didn't mean this was normal...did it?

Dungeons, monsters, items, and skillbooks. Their origin and makeup were all still mysteries.

“Then what do we do now?”

“You. Why do you keep grouping me with you into a we?”

“Surely you're not going to say we don't have anything to do with eachother!”

“We weren't a thing to begin with.”

“Then we can start being a thing now.”

“I'm amazed you can turn the conversation completely around to suit you.”

“Is it so weird that I would want us to establish that we're friends?”

“Oh. That.”

“What were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t thinking anything.”

“Hm...not true. I think you were thinking something perverteddd.”

“Stop it.”

\*\*\*\*

All the level 1 dungeons have vanished. I had wanted to keep racking up the reward points and raise up all of my abilities but looks like all my plans are out the window. I only had two choices left, I guess.

- Go hunting out in the fields
- Venture into the level 2 dungeons

Field hunting was when you hunt outside of the city – kill monsters in the more rural places. These monsters drop items and ores just like monsters in dungeons do. You’re probably thinking, “Then why don’t people do this all the time instead of paying admission to hunt in a dungeon?” Right? Well, it’s true you don’t pay the high admission fees...but this method of hunting is also highly inefficient.

In a dungeon, monsters have a set skill level, are located in a set area, and appear in a set number. You could count on maybe 3-6 monsters appearing in one place. There are times when a high number of monsters, like the time 10 appeared while I hunted with Lim Hyunjoon's party, can appear but this was rare. This means raids in dungeons are on the safe side because of its predictability.

Field hunting is unpredictable. Not only are the monsters spread out instead of being in one central area, if you're unlucky, you could even run into a high-level monster. For this reason, only a group of massive raids are done by pros or armies perform field hunting.

There are also issues with hunting monsters running around near the city by themselves. Once in awhile, monsters appear that look weak on the outside but are actually super high-level. There have been a lot of cases where less experienced parties have messed with these type of monsters and were instantly annihilated.

So basically, dungeons are the safest option.

“Do we have to resort to going into a level 2 dungeon...”

“Can we do it with the party members we have now?”

“Hm..I guess everyone else could work out but glasses girl...Bae Yeongyoung is the problem. Up to Cho Yeongoo and Han Joonseok should be ok.”

“And manager Kim?”

“If that old man just focused then he should be able to do just fine.”

“I don’t think we have to worry about Yeongyoung either.”

“Where is this confidence coming from?”

“She’s been really practicing a hell of a lot recently. She said that after meeting a certain someone and raising her ability a bit, even practice has become a lot more fun.”

“Yah? I don’t know who this person she might be referring to but he seems like a great guy.”

“Are you low key complimenting yourself right now?”

“Oh that person was me?”

Duh I knew it was me.

“Wow. You’re great at feigning ignorance. Bravo.”

“Hm hm. Anyway. At our current level, Level 2 dungeons would be a bit much. We need at least one more person who has level 2 dungeon experience...do you know anybody?”

“There is someone. He’s someone who was part of the leisure groups so I don’t think he’d want to join your party though.”

“Well, such is the life of a porter.”

“How about you? Do you know anyone?”

“Zero.”

“Wow. Wasn’t your answer to quick?”

I’m not a friendly person to start with. Even talking with Jung Sooah like this and being a party head is something that is still hard for me to believe.

“Let’s start with putting up a want ad at the market.”

We posted up an ad at the hunter market. Wanted: Level 2 hunter. Dungeon clearing experience preferred. Magician preferred. That should be enough.

Responses started flowing in.

This party has been formed less than a month ago. You think it’s alright to joining?



1. I searched for their previous posting ... I think they're a level 1 party. Seems like their doing this because of what happened recently. Hell to the no for me.
2. Same here. Apply if you want to die.
3. If you just do a simple search, you can find the names and abilities. Ask after you do at least that much.
4. Wow. If you join this party you'll 100% die. Everyone be careful.

Tap tap tap!

= Not true! We cleared a level 1 dungeon in 2 hours and then decided to go to a level 2 dungeon ok? We can definitely clear it so if you don't know anything just shut up and sit down.

Jung Sooah started typing out of anger. I quickly calmed her down but this was only after she had already pressed the enter key.

“You. Why the hell would you post that up under my id?”

“Ah. Sorry. But I was just so annoyed...can't we report these trolls or something?”

“We. Cant. Move. I'll fix it.”

All those people were just typing all that because they were worried. They know just how dangerous a hunter lifestyle is so they were just trying to make sure no one was ill-informed. I think.

I deleted the last note and waited for a response. I don't know if level 2 hunters became even more valuable with the recent events,

but we didn't get even one note of interest.

\*\*\*

I waited the entire day for a response after sending Sooah home but nothing. After thinking about it for some time, I decided to join a level 2 party by myself. My party members might feel a little betrayed but safety came first. I couldn't take beginners like them into a dungeon that could very well cost them their lives.

It was fairly easy for me to find a level 2 party to join since level 2 hunters were in high demand right now. They didn't even properly check my skill level.

The decided location was Gwanak Hills. It was a 10 person party but, looking at all the people who gathered, I couldn't really put my trust in any of them. Just from one glance I could tell that they were either people who just graduated from level 1 dungeons or people who had the lowest proficiency in their level 2 skill.

“Let's embark now that everyone is here.”

The party head was in his mid thirties. Not only did he look like a weasel, but he he had a constant sneer on his face that killed my first impression of him instantly. And as expected, an issue arose from the very start.

“What are you doing! You guys are close range attackers! So go on and attack at close range!”

The party head yelled out. The close range attackers were barely keeping themselves within striking distance and acting like they were attacking. This only happens when attackers do not have any confidence in the amount of damage they can cause. What was worse was that there were way too many close range attackers. Among the 10 members, including tankers, there were about 7 close range attackers. They were tangled up together and had zero coordination in attacking. Some were just standing by to see if the person next to them would attack.

“Jesus! Are you guys retarded! This is pissing me off!”

This was partially his fault though. All of this should have been anticipated or in the very least resolved properly by the party head but all he was doing was yelling instead of doing his duties. No, it seemed as if he didn't even know how to properly perform his duties as a party head. I started wondering if he's ever even been a party head before.

“Fireball!”

What?

Slam!

At the party head's command, the magician threw a fireball right into the middle of the chaos. A plume of dust erupted after the huge explosion that ensued.

“Keuk. This crazy...”

I spit out the dust in my mouth as I hurriedly got up after barely evading the attack. When I looked around, I saw that all the close range attackers were rolling on the ground.

This was the worst.

Fireball was a level 2 magic. It had a wide range and caused pretty high damage so it was a spell that needed to be used with caution. But this damn party head ordered the attack right where all of his party members were fighting. We’re screwed.

# Chapter 33

---

“Eu...eu....”

“Hey! Shit! Bandage!”

“We need to hurry and move this person!”

“Shit! Why the hell did that psycho throw a fireball...”

The monsters were taken care of, but the close range attackers had also taken serious damages as well. 3 had taken some damage and another 3 were in critical condition. Among those who had taken damage was the party head. Those who had taken critical damage were quickly taken outside the dungeon. Luckily there were emergency personnel outside so they would live.

“You rotten bastard! What the hell was that?”

One of the close range attackers who had taken damage yelled out at the party head.

“If we didn’t use the fireball, we would have been in trouble. If you had done your job probably, none of this would have happened.”

“What...?”

Squeeze!

When the close range attacker took hold of the party head's collar, the party head just let out a sigh and said.

“Do you just want to stop the raid right here?”

“Euk...”

“If you want to stop then just hit me and leave.”

“Shit!”

He let go of the collar and stepped back. We only had 7 people left now. We lost 3 of our members but decided to keep going. Everyone had paid 1,000 each in admission fees. No one was willing to just throw that away.

Ironically, with the reduced numbers we were able to hunt more efficiently. Even the party head started leading the members better. When I glanced at his face, I saw that his last mistake didn't concern him in the least.

To think that his mistake had caused 3 people to be hauled off to the emergency ward and he was still just fine about it.

Surely he didn't do it on purpose.

I turned my head and glanced at the magician. He was talking privately with the party head. Based on their body language, it seemed as if they were acquaintances at the very least. I guess that explains why the magician to follow such a reckless command.

We started our fight with the orks.

The party head and the 4 close range attackers fought against the orks using both offensive and defensive measures. Since I had level 2 armor, I also put in my fair share of attacks whenever the opportunity arose.

“Mr. Jeon Sangmin! Stop shielding and start attacking!”

The party head ordered. I nodded my head and went to attack the ork the party head was fighting. I pushed the longsword I held in my right hand straight into the side of the monster. Since it was only a level 1 weapon, it wasn't able to pierce the monster's hide, but it was enough to take it by surprise.

In that moment, the party head pressed on even harder. Overwhelmed by both attacks, I was able to plunge my bloodsword into his neck.

[+200]

Ha. Are you giving me 200 points since it's a level 2 monster? It's double the normal amount, but I felt a little bit cheated nonetheless because the effort it took to kill this was more than

double.

“Mr. Sangmin. Not bad.”

The party head said.

“Thank you.”

No point in spouting unnecessary modesty here. I couldn't flex too much, but I could at least show some confidence.

“Let's take care of the rest.”

\*\*\*

The raid progressed very slowly. For every fight, we rested over 20 minutes in between. We had injuries at the end of each fight. Ultimately, the party head had to declare that the raid was done after a mere 2 hours since starting.

Clap.

“We are going to stop here because there are so many injuries. I will start the contribution distribution shortly so everyone please stand by.”

After 10 minutes, the party head revealed the rankings. Party



head was number 1, magician number 2, and I was number 3. He called out everyone else one by one for a total of 7 people.

“How about the injured?”

I asked.

Since they were injured due to friendly fire, I thought it was only right that they receive some form of compensation from the magician's distribution.

The party head glanced at me briefly before saying.

“I don't know if I must give them any distribution for not even being able to evade friendly fire.”

“It's difficult to dodge that kind of an attack in that situation.”

“But didn't you dodge? You certainly received no damage.”

“I don't think that is any reason to exclude the wounded.”

“Then tell me another reason why I should compensate them. I have no inclination on paying people who didn't deserve it.”

“Isn't that something you should have brought up at the time of recruiting?”

“Mr. Jeon Sangmin. I’m only saying this being I feel your talent might be wasted otherwise. Mind your own business. If you keep putting your nose in where it doesn’t belong to stick up for someone else instead of watching your own back, you won’t live too long.”

“...understood.”

I knew that if I pushed the issue, it would only prove to hurt me. I guess I could also see where he was coming from. You shouldn’t go into a level 2 dungeon if you don’t have the skills for it. But I also knew that since the level 1 dungeons had disappeared, this was their only option.

\*\*\*

Even after we had finished the raid, I didn’t feel good about it for a long time after. Under normal circumstances, if the contribution distribution didn’t end well like today, it would become an issue where the same party would not be able to form again. Injury can happen to anyone and if someone were cut out of the distribution because of this reason alone, there would be no one willing to join that party again.

But it was different now. Because now there were people willing to join any party to be able to go to a level 2 dungeon.

“Whew..”

I let out a great big sigh as I went in to check the hunter market job board. I couldn't stop thinking of what that jerk had said.

Mind your own business.

There was never a point in time that I thought of myself as sympathetic or as a good person. I was as used to lying and pretending as a person could get due to my years as a porter. I didn't have any issues with using people and I had no problem throwing someone under the bus. But only if the circumstances warranted it.

I didn't want to take advantage of someone's misfortune. That was all. I don't know if it might have been deliberate or not but, at the end of the day, it was a fact that he had retired 3 people and robbed them of their distributions. These were people who probably were not level 2 for a long time. If you took into consideration their hospital bills...they were sure to be debt ridden for a long time.

Maybe that was his plan. To gather desperate people, retire them from the raid early on, and throw them away. Horrible.

Click.

I went to the wanted ad. That asshole party head had already put out an ad. Maybe it was because he had listed that he was open to all applicants that there were so many people applying. I was contemplating whether or not I should post something when I

decided not to.

Ring-

While looking at all the replies for his ad, my phone rang. I checked to see if it was maybe Jung Sooah but it said Song Minhan. It was my broker.

Click.

“Yeh. What’s up?”

[Hey. Didn’t you say that you were now a hunter?]

“I can probably say that I told you that several times.”

[Is level 2 ok with you?]

“Now that you mention it, I actually just came back from one just this morning. It wasn’t that hard.”

[Really? You haven’t even been a hunter that long...anyway, that’s good news. You remember Eum Hyunjoon right?]

“Yep.”

[The team he joined creating a clearing party. Why don’t you try

applying? Since the level 1 dungeons disappeared, applicants for level 2 dungeons increased like crazy. So it looks like they're getting together a bunch of level 1 hunters to go into level 2 dungeons. Of course the contribution splits become way smaller because there will be so many people in a party, but it's better than sitting around.]

“Isn't it bad to try to move with such a big party? Just the admission alone is 1,000 per person.

[I don't know the specifics but I hear that their procedure will be changing with this new crisis. From what I hear, they have some connections with the dungeon ops people so they supposedly only pay a max of 10,000 per team. So if they have a team of more than 10 people, the rest can enter a dungeon without paying admission.]

“But if there are so many people, it'll only cause more problems than help...”

[Nah. They're going to Baeksapyoung.]

“Ah...if it's there then...”

Baeksapyoung dungeon wasn't in the city but in a rural area. It was a 2 level dungeon known for its wide open space that could fit several dozen people with no problem.

[I'll give you their number so call them and check it out.]

“It’s fine if I bring a couple more people with me right?”

[Sure. They’ll be recruiting based on tests anyway so it’s better to have more people apply.]

“Thanks for the tip. But what’s the referral fee...?”

[This is on the house so shut up.]

“Thank you.”

I held the phone to my ear and bowed. He couldn’t see me, but it was the thought that counts. After hanging up, I hurriedly called all my party members. Time to rock and roll.

# Chapter 34

---

“You must be alert in places like this because you never know where a monster will pop out from.”

I said as I got out the car and looked around. My body was aching all over from sitting crammed in a cramped car for over two hours.

“Even if there’s a dungeon caretaker nearby?”

Jung Sooah asked. I pointed at the surrounding reeds.

“There are monsters that hide in those. Even if there are caretakers, this is a lot of ground to cover. They can’t be at all places at all times. I hear that once in awhile they do put fire to the reeds but that only helps for a moment. Those damn reeds grow back in less than a month.”

“That is fast. Do reeds usually grow that fast?”

“Living organisms near dungeons grow much faster than anywhere else. You know that.”

“Ha. Then does that mean if you live near a dungeon, you’ll grow old faster?”

Jung Sooah said with wide surprised eyes as she took one step back away from the dungeon.

“There’s no effect on the human body. I’ve been doing this for a good and long time now and I’m fine.”

“I see...if things grow real fast then farms should do splendidly!”

I sighed at Jung Sooah’s words.

How is it that this girl knows absolutely nothing.

“The Chinese have already thought of that and are taking advantage of it like crazy. They’re now the driving force in agriculture.”

“Then why don’t any of the other countries use the same method?”

“Don’t belittle it just because it’s farming – it actually requires highly advanced technology. If crops are harvested again and again on the same land, the quality of the soil will deplete quite quickly. But in China, they were able to solve this issue in some secret way.”

“I see.”

“Do you really see?”

“Half of it. Anyway, college grads are pretty amazing. How do



you know so much?”

“How does knowing this have anything to do with being a college grad? You can search it on the internet easily.”

“It looks like everyone is slowly starting to show up.”

Han Joonseok said.

The total number of people due to appear were 31. Eun Hyunjoon’s team ‘Mercenary’ had group 1, group 2, and group 3 – and there were 10 from group 3 here today. Amongst the new applicants were 6 from my team and 15 other potential recruits. I spotted a familiar full face helmet in the crowd.

This person acted as the overseer of those who appeared today. Seeing his equipment, I could tell he had acquired some serious upgrades from the last time I saw him.

Looks to be at least a million dollars?

“It’s been a while.”

“I did here that you would be here today.”

“It seems your equipment did some major improving.”

“Ah. You mean this? This came from joining the team. It’s kind of a rental – you could say. If I do well, then it’s possible to get even better ones.”

“It’s amazing that you are already acting as an overseer when it hasn’t been long since you joined the team.”

“It was all luck. I took a couple of tests and received some good marks. Truthfully this is a sort of test too. It’s not an easy thing to control and coordinate more than 30 people, you see.”

“That’s true. But how will this work?”

If we were to be headed by one overseer, it could very well be that we could only go in 10 people at a time. This was something I experienced when I was a part of the weasel’s party.

“I figured that I would group together teams who have good chemistry or fit well with one another. Since you said that you already have a team, you guys can be grouped as is.”

“Hm. So it won’t be based on positions?”

“Honestly, that would be the best option but I can’t assess a hunter’s true ability in a position just yet so...I feel things might run more smoothly with groups who are already familiar with one another’s ability.”

“Hm. That makes sense.”

It was true that though we could give our stats to them and have them arrange groups in that manner, stats weren't everything. Think of manager Kim, for example. He was supposed to be a level 2 magician, but his ability was so unpredictable and volatile depending on his mood that most of the time his skill did not work. And then there's me. The prime example. So it made sense he would group us this way. Better chemistry would bring out a person's best potential.

\*\*\*

“Basically, all of the main attacks will be coming from us. You guys will be our support and will follow our instructions.”

We were all divided into 5 teams. The 10 group 3 mercenaries were one team. My members and I were one team. And the 15 leftover people were divided into 3 teams.

As soon as we entered Baeksapyoung dungeon, we were met with a vast terrain of grasslands. Unlike the surrounding areas of the dungeon that was covered in reeds, this area was overrun with weeds that covered over our feet. The flat terrain allowed us to see the hills and valleys up in the distance.

The first monster we met was a lizard man. It was weaker in strength compared to an ork, but it made up for it with its agility and hard as steel scaly skin that was very difficult to pierce. Its weapon of choice – hand held harpoon. One attack from this was usually fatal.

“Why did our first monster have to be a lizard man...”

Eum Hyunjoon's face grew dark. In instances where the manpower was plenty but the skills were lower, it was much better to go up against an ork. Orks tended to use just their strength to overwhelm their opponents so big groups worked fairly well.

However, Lizardmen were a different story. They had high defensive power, and a botched attack will just simply bounce off its skin without inflicting any damage. Eum Hyunjoon looked to me and said.

“Currently, excluding the mercenary team, the only person who can inflict any damage on this guy would probably be you, Mr. Jeon Sangmin. Everyone else should spread out and try to distract him while Mr. Sangmin goes in for a strike. So, to conclude, you all will be support and distraction, my team and I will be going in head on, and Mr. Sangmin will deal the blow.

After going over the battle plan we split up and got into position. There were 5 lizardmen in view. The first to move were the only two magicians in the group who cast a spell. Manager Kim's sleep spell was able to put one lizardman into slumber while the missionary team's magician had cast another spell, 'frenzy', which made another lizardman go crazy.

I had heard that sometimes spells may rub off on just one portion of a monster but this was the first time I saw it with my own eyes. Three of the remaining lizardmen were rooted to the spot as their

feet have fallen asleep.

Eum Hyunjoon wordlessly made finger gestures to signal the dealers to begin their attack. Five members of the mercenary team collectively shot out arrows and spells.

Pa pa pang!

I saw a magic missile among one of the spells. It seemed there was a member of that team who also used that type of spell.

“SSSSSsss!”

I could hear the angry slithering sound characteristic of lizardmen at the same time 3 magic missiles flew one after the other to hit that same monster. It went down in a heap. I guess it was a level 1 missile. Even with a low level spell, you are still able to bring down a higher level monster if you have weakened or pierced its skin beforehand.

I kept hearing the sound of level 1 arrows bouncing off the lizardmen's armor. Of the five monsters, one was still asleep and the other was caught up in a craze and attacking one of the remaining three monsters. Of the three monsters unable to move about freely, one of them had been hit with the magic missiles and was out of commission.

Eum Hyunjoon ran toward the last lizardman that was still cognizant of what was going on and pushed it back with his shield.

Slam!

Though it was similar in size with Eum Hyunjoon, the lizardman grew significantly offbalance and teered. Immediately, the close range attackers of the missionary team rushed to its side.

“Mr. Jeon Sangmin! Get that other one!”

“Got it!”

I sprinted toward the monster Eum Hyunjoon was pointing at. The lizardman that had been hit by the missiles was back up and was running toward Eum Hyunjoon.

Two arrows whistled through the air toward that monster. It was Han Joonseok and Bae Yeongyoung. They couldn't inflict any damage but they could distract it.

The lizardman turned to look my way. As I closed the distance, the harpoon came flying at me with frightening force and speed.

I barely dodged it as I drew my longsword and stabbed out.

Force is the product of mass times acceleration. This meant the mass of me and my armor times a speed of 55km/s.

The lizardman's body flew backwards about 10 steps.

That monster was now still. I turned and went to the monster that Eum Hyunjoon was fighting. I held it from behind.

Right before it could go crazy to try and escape my hold, I stabbed it with my bloodysword in the back of its neck. A green tinted fluid started spouting out. The sword, indeed, started turning the same color.

Weird.

# Chapter 35

---

The green blood flowed freely when I twisted the bloodysword to widen the wound. As soon as I plucked out my weapon, Eum Hyunjoon cut off its head.

[+200]

Luckily it was already dead before he had done that so the points still came through.

The lizardman I had pushed away earlier started screaming out as it ran in our direction.

“Can you do it alone?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll leave you to it!”

Eum Hyunjoon said as he left me to tend to the lizard that was now recovering from the frenzy spell. All the mercenary members and 3 other teams followed suit.

What? He was taking his entire mercenary team? I get it that he trusted me...but I wouldn’t mind if he trust me a wee bit less and left a couple of his team to back me up.



“Ahhh!”

Clash!

The lizardman’s harpoon and my longsword clashed violently. The monster’s harpoon had bounced off even though I was wielding my sword with one hand and he with both hands. In that moment, I swooped in and sliced its neck with my bloodysword.

Blood gushed out. I took one step back and stabbed it with the longsword, but it parried my second attack with its harpoon.

I want to emphasize that the lizardman was much weaker in physical strength than myself.

As soon as I saw an opening in his upper body, I stabbed again into the wound I had made earlier.

It grabbed at its neck and fell to its knees.

[+200]

Two down. Eum Hyunjoon’s team had also taken care of one lizard and was going up against the remaining two. I thought about going to help when I saw they could take care of themselves.

“How about our team rest for a bit?”

“Wow...SunbehOppa...wow...”

“What?”

“Were you always like that?”

Cho Youngoo, who was probably just watching at the sidelines, asked in awe.

“I guess the equipment is pretty good.”

“It seems like I’m not of any use to you.”

“Just think of it as you’re racking up experience and knowledge right now. Even watching will prove to be valuable later on.”

“Ok. I’ll try to keep that in mind.”

Cho Youngoo said with a nod of his head.

My team and I went and sat down at a small spot to rest while we watched Eum Hyunjoon’s party finish the hunt.

Three close range attackers had surrounded one lizardman and was pushing it forcefully all around with their shields. The men standing behind them were stabbing at the lizardman from behind the shields.

The monster was trying to defend itself by striking out with its harpoon but it was woefully struck down by the shields with no effect. Slowly, its scales were coming off with each attack until it finally began to sustain damage.

“Wow. There’s that way of hunting too. I never knew.”

“It’s not a beginner play. This was something that was probably practiced a number of times – because something like that could only work with good coordination.”

Right before the lizardman looked about ready to faint, Eum Hyunjoon and the mercenaries backed up to allow the other teams to finish it off.

The three teams surrounded the lizard just as Eum Hyunjoon’s team had done and followed suit.

The lizardman ultimately succumbed to the attacks. The only monster left was the one still asleep.

“Long range attackers, please come forward!”

As soon as Eum Hyunjoon said this, glasses girl and Han Joonseok hurriedly ran to him. Shortly, we were able to learn what he wanted to do. The level 1 long range attacks began to rain onto the sleeping lizardman.

Arrows and spells showered over the monster. The monster yelled out and woke up, but he was unable to find the cause of the attacks and started to cough up blood before collapsing. But the arrows didn't stop wreaking havoc on the monster's body.

“Since we were able to prove that level 1 attacks can still sustain damage on level 2 monsters if done in the right way, I hope you take this opportunity to have a bit more confidence in yourselves. You all have the ability to kill these monsters with the right knowledge and experience.”

“Oh! Oh!”

Everyone sat around talking to each other with excited faces as we waited for the monsters to evaporate. Everyone's expression went from being full of fear and tension to being filled with confidence and enthusiasm. This was such a 180 from when we had first stepped into the dungeon. So this was the true effect of a good party head.

“Amazing, isn't he?”

Manager Kim asked and I nodded in agreement. The more I got to know him, the more he amazed me. He was able to move everyone's hearts with just a few simple words.

“Finally there is someone who can appreciate my skills. No, there is no other choice but to acknowledge my ability I guess. Honestly, if it wasn't for me, this last fight could have become really dangerous.”

“...That was what you meant?”

“These people I mean. No matter how much they may be jealous of me, they should be able to at least compliment me now and again. Must I resort to complimenting myself?”

“Bravo. Bravo. You have really outdone yourself this time, Manager Kim.”

“I don’t need it anymore. I don’t want you to compliment me after I asked for it.”

“Manager Kim! You are the best!”

“Oh ho. I said I didn’t like that sort of this.”

When Jung Sooah started being silly and yelling out compliments, that was when Manager Kim finally started to smile a bit. Han Joonseok said.

“Who is that person?”

“I don’t know myself, really. I had only been in his party just one time. But he was pretty good that time too.”

“It’s not just a matter of pretty good. If he can coordinate people like that every time, then I’m sure he would be able to climb to

group 1 in no time.”

“Are you jealous?”

“If I said I wasn’t, I’d be lying.”

“Well, as long as we work hard, we should improve a lot too.”

“But it would take us a couple years to get to the next level I bet.”

“Who cares if it takes us some years. Just being able to stay a hunter is great in my book.”

At Cho Youngoo’s response, Han Joonseok laughed and nodded in agreement. Glasses girl, who had remained quiet this whole, spoke up.

“Now that I think about it, all of my arrows hit their marks this time.”

“Don’t forget that that’s because of me!”

Jung Sooah yelled out.

“Speaking of that, how far do you think your buffer’s reach is?”

Her skill was to bring up her comrades’ skills and increase their

effectiveness. If it had actually raised all of our abilities (over 30 of us), then that would be a hell of a skill.

“Unfortunately it seems five would be my limit. Not including me.”

“Do you think the reach will increase with time?”

“I think that it is quite possible for me to be able to increase the buff amount. But I also think the more people I include in your reach, the less potent it will be.”

“That makes sense. So if you can raise everyone’s ability by “X” percent, then the more people you lend your skill to...the smaller the percentage you will be able to raise each individual’s ability.”

“So I guess I should only use my buffer on our teammates for now then.”

“What’s your proficiency at right now?”

“It’s 2 now. I think that every time I go into a dungeon and use it, it goes up one point.”

Buffer type skills get stronger with increase in proficiency...but I was waiting for something more special to show up since it was a level 0 skill.

“It’s an item!”

Someone hollered loudly. I got up from my seat and looked toward the sound of the voice. Even though it was a level 2 dungeon, item drops were still a rarity.

“It looks like Aegis’ shield.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s a level 1 shield. It’s made out of leather so defense ability isn’t that great really.”

“Then it’s a dud?”

“No. It’s not terrible. That shield still has the ability to slow down an enemy. Last I checked, it was selling for about 200,000 dollars.”

“Then how much can each person get?”

“Since there’s about 31 of us, the price will depend on the distribution contribution but...I’d say about 6,000 per person at least.”

“What. Shit. Jaaackpot.”



“But there is one problem.”

“What is it?”

“Who the hell is going to buy level 1 equipment right now?”

“Ah...”

Right now, all the level 1 dungeons had disappeared. Of course this didn't mean it was a totally useless thing, but you could expect that the demand for it would have reduced considerably. If there isn't anyone willing to buy it, we would be lucky to sell it for even half its regular price.

Nonetheless, this was still a considerable success. Not only did we get through the rest of the dungeon with some ease, we had minimal injuries and even lucked out on an item.

I had also gotten to rack up some reward points. And you know what, we even had another item drop later on.

“What the hell? Again?!”

Jung Sooh yelled out excitedly. I was probably equally excited and shocked. In all my years of portering, I had never heard of two items dropping in one raid. Something was afoot. Yep.

# Chapter 36

---

An Aegis shield and a run of the mill longsword. Respectively they should have been priced at 200,000 and 100,000 dollars. Even Eum Hyunjoon who rarely shows any emotion had surprise etched on his face.

“Thanks to everyone’s efforts, we were able to see amazing results. The only unfortunate bit of news is that the value of level 1 items have dropped to almost half their normal price, so it will be hard for me to estimate just how much we can sell them for.”

“We’re fine as long as you pay us something!”

“HAHAHA!”

Everyone still had a relatively unconcerned look at Eum Hyunjoon’s words. There was no one among us who didn’t know the situation, and it seemed everyone was content with the results nonetheless. Above all, the most important thing was that no one had sustained any serious injury.

“Now we will announce the contribution rankings by teams.”

The rankings went as follows: Mercenary team #1 and our team #2. Who really cares how everyone else ranked right?

“Oh. We got 2nd place!”

“Of course we did. Do you know how hard I worked?”

Manager Kim said.

“If we’re ranking by teams, then how are individuals going to be paid out?”

“That will be done by the party or team head.”

I responded to Han Joonseok’s question. Everyone swallowed with anticipation in their faces. Except Manager Kim. His smile was so big that they were almost touching his ears. Though his job is to use his skill just one time and let everyone else do the dirty work, if we were to look at the results as a whole, it was only right to give him number two since he was only one of two magicians in the whole raid group.

“Fourth place...”

Glasses girl had her head down and was squirming.

“Don’t be too disappointed. Someday your ability will improve even more!”

“No, that’s that’s not it. It’s because this is the first time I wasn’t last place.”

“Is that right?”

“Yes. I’m sorry to Youngoo Oppa but I’m honestly a little happy. It’s all thanks to you, party head.”

The way she stared up at me, she reminded me of a small puppy, so I patted her head.

“You did well. Keep doing what you’re doing.”

“I will!”

“SunbehOppa. How about me?”

“You didn’t even do anything.”

“But I’m the team mascot. Hello?”

“You mean giant?”

Smack.

Hm. But it’s true.

Soon it was time to auction off the items. It was just formality because, as we expected, no one bought it. We were, however, able to sell it to the dungeon operating team for 200,000 for both items. It was more money than I had expected them to sell for. After this

and that, our team was able to collect a total of 40,000 dollars.

“Holy-crap!”

Jung Sooah yelled out a big whoop as she saw the 4,000 dollars transferred into her account. I was able to collect 12,000 dollars – her money was more like pocket change compared to mine. To think that I could collect 12,000 dollars in one raid. You could say it was because we were lucky enough to come across two dropped items, but this was still a lot of money.

Everyone in all the other teams had ecstatic looks on their faces too. Manager Kim was all riled up saying he would make reservations at a top steakhouse and buy everyone dinner. Of course he would probably change his tune in about 10 minutes so I hurriedly made my own reservations at a porkbelly house.

Eum Hyunjoon walked to where I was standing.

“Thank you so much. We were able to complete the raid successfully without any major hiccups thanks to you.”

“It was thanks to you, I’m certain.”

“Honestly I didn’t walk over here to say empty compliments. I actually came here to ask a favor of you. Would you be available to join us on another raid?”

“When did you have in mind?”

“Within 3 days’ time.”

“So soon?”

If it were only a 5 person party, you could plan something as soon as the next day and move quickly. But judging from Eum Hyunjoon’s demeanor, it felt like he wanted to do another raid on a similar scale as the one from just today. To pull off something like this with so many people in just three days...that was almost preposterous.

“Yes. We might even move faster than that even.”

“I would need to ask my party members, but I’m sure they would all be up for it.”

“Great. And one more thing...”

Eum Hyunjoon said as he lowered his voice.

“Can you please keep today’s events a secret?”

“Why?”

In one round, two items had dropped. This could not be coincidence.

“I thought it might be because of the number of people.”

“Hm. You have a point. But if it’s something as simple as that, everyone will eventually realize it too.”

“So that’s why I want to reap the benefits as many times as possible before that happens. So I’ll trust that you’ll keep this on the down low.”

Eum Hyunjoon finished what he had to say and went to each party head one by one to make the same request. It seemed as if everyone agreed to it.

\*\*\*

We again embarked on the Baeksapyoung dungeon with the mercenary guild every three days. In one month of doing this, we were able to come up with a total of 15 dropped items. On average, that was about 1.5 items for every time we did a raid. That was a lot of money in the course of a month.

We were able to deduce certain things while doing our raids and taking stock of the different item drops.

1. Item drop was proportionate to the number of hunters entering a dungeon
2. The type of item dropped depends on the hunter’s equipment and skill level
3. The lower the hunter’s level compared to the dungeon’s level, the higher the probability of an item drop

4. There was no way this would remain a secret for long. We don't know if someone leaked it or if other people figured it out on their own but the number of level 1 items put up on the hunter market went up like crazy.

- Why are there so many level 1 items at the market all of a sudden?
- And they're all super cheap now too
- Is this all stuff from level 1 hunters who can't go to level 2 dungeons?
- This is something I heard from someone but there have been a whole lot of level 1 item drops recently. There's more new level 1 items on the market now than used items.
- Do you think this has anything to do with the level 1 dungeons disappearing?
- Why doesn't any of it drop for my team? We went about 10 times but nada.
- What the. Do you think the dungeons are favoring some people and not others?
- Tsk tsk. There are still people who don't know the secret to this?
- Please share what you know.
- Just wait. Let us milk it a bit more first.

After checking the forums a bit, I closed the window. Man. Whoever that is sucks. I mean, we were asked to keep it on the downlow and I guess he's sort of doing that...but why the hell would he even hint at a possible tip like that? I'm sure whoever it is is also going on separate raids to milk it for all it was worth. Shameless. But good thing we went on all those raids first. It was a smart move.

Because soon, the special condition we had where parties in excess of 10 people had free admission...was not just limited to the mercenary guild any more. It was now available to the general public.

It wasn't long before level 1 items were less than half their normal value. It didn't look like it would go back up any time soon.



I closed my left eye and checked my stats.

[0,15,3350]

Over the last month, I had accumulated over 10,000 reward points. With that, I split it up to raise all of my abilities. I'm a well rounded boy don't you know? That was why I only had about 3,000 left now. Strength, endurance, reflexes, focus, defense...I had raised all of them one time for a total of 7,500 reward points.

With this much, it would now be possible to take my party members into a level 2 dungeon all on my own now. I felt like if I took into account Jung Sooh's buffer skill, I might even be able to kill a level 2 monster with my bare hands.

What was even better was that everyone on my team had a low level average so we would have higher chances for item drops.

Eum Hyunjoon seemed very disappointed that we chose to leave his team. But the level 1 items were quickly dropping in value by each passing day and now I was strong enough to clear a level 2 dungeon all on my own that there seemed little point in me sticking with that team any longer.

"I'm a bit sad that today will be your last day."

"I wish you guys only the best of luck."

Honestly I was a bit sad too. I felt like there was still a lot I could learn from Eum Hyunjoon.

The raids were now moving forward just as fast as they had been the last month. No, it was actually now moving even faster. I felt a bit worried and said.

“Party head. Aren’t the raids moving a bit too fast lately?”

“Is there a problem?”

“No. Not really a problem...just”

I couldn’t really tell him that if he cleared the raids too quickly that an irregular might appear. Because it wasn’t a 5 person party. Maybe I was making a big deal out of nothing. But I couldn’t stop from still feeling a bit iffy.

And soon my worries were affirmed.

“What is that...?”

“Was there a monster like that?”

“Party head?”

Everyone was staring at a humongous monster in the distance.

“Sun...sunbehOppa?”

Jung Sooah’s voice was rattling almost violently.

It was the monster that I had once slain long ago. The level 4 monster was standing in the distance.

# Chapter 37

---

“Everyone stand back.”

Eum Hyunjoon said quietly. The monster was at the base of a hill, wandering around about 200 meters away. It seemed as if it hadn't noticed us just yet.

I couldn't understand what he was up to. Just from looking at the monster, I knew it was impossible for our group to go up against it and win.

I went up to Eum Hyunjoon and whispered.

“That's a level 4 monster.”

“I figured that much.”

“It would be too much to try to kill it with our party. I think it would be best to fall back for the time being.”

“That was what I had in mind too but...”

He had a sort of disappointed look on his face. There were no items dropped this round, and we weren't able to collect many ores either. But we couldn't really call it a loss since we were able to gain a lot from our little secret knowledge over the past month. When it came down to it, it was better to miss out on today's

earnings than to lose a life.

“The cons greatly outweigh the pros of going up against a beast like that.”

When I came right out and said it, Eum Hyunjoon finally nodded his head. He waved his arms to get everyone’s attention.

“We’ll call it a day and turn around early. It is unfortunate, but this is for your safety so I hope you all understand.”

“Why don’t we try and fight it?”

“Come on. That guy looks crazy strong. What are you saying?”

“But we did good up until today. And we have over 30 people here. Isn’t that something?”

“The party head has already made his decision. It’s better to follow what he says.”

“So you really want to drop out without anything to show for it?”

“What do you mean show for it? We milked this cow for all it was worth this past month! We could afford to lose out on one raid...”

“Don’t be ignorant. You need to milk every opportunity.”

And the comments went on and on in this manner. I wasn't surprised the conversation went this way since all our raids had been so easy thus far. Everyone was now full of confidence. Almost too full. I guess it's not an easy thing to objectively assess your own skill when things get too easy.

Eum Hyunjoon interjected.

"It's a level 4 monster. It is impossible to go up against something like that with us alone."

"Level 4? Why is something like that here?"

"It's an irregular."

Everyone shut up. All the resistance seemed to disappear in an instant at that one word. The only thing that could be heard was the rustling of the weeds underfoot...nothing else.

That was when everyone started heading toward the exit of the dungeon one by one.

"Hmm..."

Something felt off. I started counting the people leaving the dungeon and the people still left. 30.

We were missing someone.

“Wait.”

“What’s wrong?”

Eum Hyunjoon asked.

“Someone is missing.”

“What? How can that..”

“There is only 30 of us. It seems someone left the group at one point.”

“There’s no way that we wouldn’t have known if he left during a fight.”

“They probably slipped out just recently.”

It most likely happened when everyone was worried over the irregular. We wouldn’t have noticed if they slipped back into the dungeon while we were preparing to leave.

“Who would..”

“That helmet guy...”

Glasses girl said. When I turned to look at her, she said with more conviction.

“That man with the motorcycle helmet isn’t here. I thought it was weird but I didn’t think it was my place to say...”

“That stupid...”

Eum Hyunjoon started cursing.

“Why? Do you remember something?”

“That man’s brother died in that last incident when the same looking monster had shown up in the city. They were both in the same party at the time, but he was the only one who made it out alive.”

“Surely he doesn’t mean to go face that beast alone? It’s not even the same monster.”

“That’s why I wasn’t really concerned...it was my mistake. I should have been prepared something like this would happen.”

“There’s no point in blaming yourself now. We need to hurry up and bring him back..”

GRAAWRD!



CRASH!

My whole body vibrated. Eum Hyunjoon and I immediately locked eyes.

“It’s him.”

“I’ll go get him.”

Eum Hyunjoon hurriedly turned to try and run toward the sound. I grabbed ahold of his arm.

“Wait just a moment. I’ll go.”

“What?...”

“It’s only right that I should go. Your responsibility as the party head should be to lead everyone out of here safely and quickly.”

“But this is my burden”

“The person with the strongest ability in this entire team is me.”

“But...”

“Do you really want to waste time we already don’t have?”

“...Then I’ll entrust this to you.”

I nodded, turned around, and said.

“Manager Kim. Please take care of our team members.”

“I don’t think it’s right.”

“What is?”

“You going this time. It’s an irregular but that one’s different. It’s not just a boss. If you go, you’ll die. I’m sure.”

“You might be right.”

“But you’re still going to go?”

“Compared to the risk, the reward could be amazing.”

“What do you mean reward? What reward is there in fighting such a monster?”

I left Manager Kim standing with a puzzled expression and walked to Jung Sooh.

“I’ll ask you just one thing. Can you please go with me?”

“Ok.”

“You don’t want to ask me why?”

“Do I need to know?”

“I mean. No. I guess not.”

She wouldn’t be in any danger.

I gave her a great big hug.

\*\*\*

“Woohoo!”

“You’re being too loud.”

“You’re really fast though!. How on earth can you run so fast?”

“It’s not even all that amazing.”

It wasn't. Of course thanks to the effort skill, I was able to improve my abilities tremendously, something like this could be easily replicated by a special skill or equipment. High level hunters being able to move with almost inhuman speed is all thanks to the aid of their equipment.

If you looked at it that way, my ability was probably now at the same level as a level 3 equipment.

“But do you have a plan on how you're going to kill the level 4 monster?”

“I was thinking of borrowing a bit of your skill.”

“Oh. That?”

In the case of a particular skill, when proficiency increases, their ability either increases in accuracy or they could even gain a new ability. In Jung Sooah's case, when her proficiency clocked in at 10, it produced the latter.

She could now pool her entire buffer ability and give it to just one person.

“But if I use it one time, I can't use it for an entire day.”

“If we kill that thing, then we're done for the day so don't worry about it.”

Jung Sooah's one person buffer gave one person a 50% boost in their abilities for 10 minutes. Unlike the buffer given to 5 people in a party, this one had a much longer cool time. But the 50% increase was worth it.

It was especially worth it in circumstances such as this where I would have to go against a monster that is way above my level. This buffer could put me at enough of an advantage where I would have a fighting chance. On top of that, the skill was not adding to my current ability, but multiplying it. If a person's normal strength was at 200%, then instead of it being just 250%...it would be boosted to 300%.

"If that was the case, why couldn't we have done this in the first place. We would have been able to get help from everyone else too."

"Then we would also have to do the contribution split with everyone. Come on. Use your head."

"What would be split?"

"Item."

"How can you be sure it's going to drop an item?"

"Well...it's not really a definite thing. But the probability is very high."

All the irregulars that had shown up, in my experience, have dropped an item. The first and second ones both dropped a level 0 skillbook. The third one dropped the escape scrolls. So it was only reasonable to think that this one would drop something too. And this one was high level. I was almost positive it would drop something really cool.

“Oh. I’m starting to get excited.”

“We don’t know yet though. It might be smart to not even start a fight with it. We aren’t even fully prepared.”

“But you don’t think it’s going to be too dangerous right?”

“Well...if it gets too tough, there’s always the escape scroll.”

I’m not stupid to think of running in blind without a back up plan. I was only doing this because I had a sort of insurance. This was also a great chance for me to rack up more reward points if possible. This one used its strength and its long reach to its advantage. But it lacked in agility.

This meant I would have enough time to run away if need be.

\*\*\*

The monster was jumping about as if it were crazed. Right in

front of it, the helmet wearing hunter was trying to fight the beast with just one sword. He looked and moved as if he was already running out of energy. I don't know when they started fighting but I thanked the lord he was able to stay alive at least this long.

The monster struck out with its long arm and helmet guy rolled out of the way. The monster struck out its arm one more time, clawing a fist full of dirt into the air, and helmet guy rolled out of the way once more. It looked like he was doing a good job of dodging but who knows. The monster might just be playing around with him.

If the monster really wanted to kill him, helmet guy probably would have been long dead. Nonetheless, it was a relief he was alive.

I let Jung Sooah down in a safe spot and ran toward the monster.

“Sooah, stay ready!”

“Ok!”

Helmet guy and the monster turned in my direction at the same time. I could hear that helmet guy was saying something, but I didn't hear clearly enough to know what.

“Graawrrr”

The monster yelled out loud.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

In just three steps, I ran in between the monster and helmet guy.

The beast swung out its long arm. What. It couldn't think of any other move? Its long reach was definitely its strength...but it was also a weakness. The longer the reach, the weaker it was in close combat. I ran head on to close the gap and swung out my longsword.

But I couldn't even make a dent in its hard leathery skin. Well, it was a level 1 weapon. I immediately swung out with my bloodsword. This didn't work either. I guess the bloodsword couldn't do its job right since it didn't have any blood to increase its piercing power.

“Watch out!”

I heard helmet guy yell behind me. I made a backstep and created distance with the monster.

Tap.

This time it swung out its leg at the area I had been in just a second before. Its big body made it easy for me to see every one of its movements.



“Take this.”

I pulled out one page of the escape scrolls and handed it over to helmet guy. I needed him to leave so that I could properly concentrate on the fight.”

“What’s this?”

“It’s going to take you out of the dungeon. As soon as you rip it, it’ll transport you out!”

“I need to kill that bastard!”

“You know that’s impossible!”

I grabbed helmet guy and tumbled away. The monster’s claw just grazed by us. I didn’t feel like arguing with him.

“I came here just for you. Eum Hyunjoon wanted to come, but I was able to just barely talk him out of it. Who else do you want to come and risk their life?”

“I won’t live long anyway.”

“What...?”

Helmet guy raised his sword and dashed toward the monster

once more.

# Chapter 38

---

There was no reason for me to keep trying to persuade him to do otherwise.

Chop!

“Keuk?”

I made a chop to the back of his neck. I guess I didn’t properly control my strength because I heard a small sound, but it was fine – he didn’t die. I tossed his unconscious body gently to the side and drew my sword.

As soon as I raised my hand up, Jung Sooah made an OK sign in return. A bright light came down over my head.

Beep.

[10:00]

The 10 minute timer had been set.

I kicked back on the ground and ran. Reflex 225%. I just needed 1 second running in top speed.

The monster’s body came almost to my nose.

Grawwwr!

Its strength was its sheer power, its reach...but also its defense. The longsword and bloodysword were not enough to pierce this bastard's skin.

Its weakness?

Eye.

I used the momentum of my run to climb up its body.

I could feel the 300% in strength boosting my legs to run so fast it felt like I was flying.

I swung my sword straight into its neck to lever myself up onto its shoulder. From there I jumped up and stabbed it in the eye.

KRAWWWWR!

So close. But I didn't put enough force behind that attack to pierce it. I jumped off the monster and jabbed at it with my longsword. It yelled out once more and stepped back.

I rolled my shoulder a bit and moved to the side.

This time the monster raised both its arms to try and slam them down on top of me.

Should I rush in?

I'm rushing in!

It slammed down both arms.

I barely missed being crushed, but the ground shook – and I shook with it. A big plume of dust rose into the air, and I could see its head poking out from within the brown cloud.

“Haa!”

I jammed my sword into its head.

It felt as if my spine were about to snap.

I could see its claw rushing toward me. I couldn't miss this chance. I watched the path of the claw and and stepped forward.

The sharp claw just barely missed my ear.

Everything was dim because of the dust that was still in the air. But that was the same for the beast.

I kept slamming at the monster again and again as if I were chopping wood with an ax.

The monster finally seemed to crumble. But another claw came flying at me. This time as I moved out of the way, I stabbed upward with my sword.

KRWAWW!

The monster hollered. It wasn't able to follow my quick movements – especially with all this dust.

I kept at it.

Though I still wasn't able to pierce its tough skin, it could still feel the blunt trauma I was delivering with each blow. I needed to sap it of all its strength. Then when it couldn't move well anymore, I would stab at its eye again.

The dust clouds finally settled.

“Krrr.”

“SunbehOppa's the best!”

During the time I stepped back to catch my breath, I heard Jung Sooah yelling out loud.

I made a small smirk and ran at the monster once more.

Again the sharp claw!

I dodged left, right. Two times, before I moved to the side. An opening.

I slammed my sword into it again, and it seemed be ready to topple over me. I made two more quick blows before stepping back.

Slam!

It finally collapsed to its knees.

[9:31]

Only 31 seconds had passed.

I still had a lot of time left to keep dealing it damage.

\*\*\*

[01:51]

“Whew. whew.”

“Krrrrr...”

I bowed my shoulders to try and catch my breath. 8 minutes had passed. The monster looked just about worn out now too. I had been dealing the blows this whole time, but it was still not down. I was able to truly appreciate the ferociousness of a level 4 monster.

But I would be victorious.

I ran behind it.

The monster slammed the ground where I had been, but the force behind it was much weaker than when we had first started out.

I slammed another blow and it flinched – but wasn’t able to dodge. It was too big to be able to evade any of my blows. So I continued to deal him blow after blow all over its body in this manner.

And finally, it began to throw up blood.

The blood that was spurting out splattered onto the blade of my bloodysword.

Slice!



This time, I was able to make a slight cut. It wasn't a big one, but it was enough. I jammed my bloody sword into that opening.

KRAWWWR!

It yelled out viciously and rolled around. Now that the bloodysword was lodged into its body, its time was ticking. But then again, time was almost up for me too.

The timer was telling me I had 8 seconds left.

I ran toward the monster and jumped up high. Falling from the air was a dangerous move. Because there was no way for me to dodge any oncoming attacks.

For this reason, I was trying to use the element of surprise by attacking quickly.

This was my chance to stab it in the eye.

It swung out with its claw. Did it still have energy to fight back?

Smack!

Ah. Shit.

Slam!

Hit by its attack, I flew about 10 meters in the air and fell to the ground. Hard.

“Keuk.”

I can smell blood from inside my mouth. My stomach felt queasy but I could still move. Thank the lord for my armor.

[00:00]

Bee beep.

Slam!

At the same time the timer went off, the monster made a giant noise as it collapsed. My longsword was sticking out of its eye. Right before I was hit, I was able to succeed in connecting my sword with its eye.

“Whew...”

“Krrr...”

Seeing as it was still alive, it was a sturdy one. Under usual circumstances, I would immediately run up and slice its throat or twist the sword in its eye. Because a monster had amazing healing abilities. But I didn’t need to in this case. My bloodysword was

lodged into its body – sapping away its lifesource.

The more I thought about it, the more I took a liking to that weapon. It was pretty great. Though its attack power was a bit lacking, it made up for it in other ways such as this.

“Eum...”

I could hear helmet guy starting to wake up behind me.

Great for him. Waking up after all the good stuff is over.

“Are you awake?”

“Keuk. What the hell did you...”

“If you want to commit suicide, just jump off a bridge. Don’t you know it’s an awful nuisance doing something like that in a dungeon?”

“What the hell do you care? ...Anyway, what about the monster?”

“I took care of it.”

“Wh...what?”

He looked to where I was pointing. The monster was collapsed face down and taking its last breath.

“Did it die?”

“Almost.”

“That’s good.”

He drew his sword and started walking toward the monster. I stood in front of him and blocked his path.

“Move. I need to kill it.”

“I can’t let you do that.”

“Why is that?”

“I was the one who took care of this monster. If it happens to drop an item, then there could be a conflict in who claims ownership.”

“Whatever comes out, I’ll give it to you so move.”

“I said I can’t let you do that.”

If he kills it, then all my reward points would fly right out the

window.”

“I said move.”

Helmet guy pointed his sword at me. I didn’t respond.

“Why the hell are you blocking my way...”

“I have my own reasons...”

“This is my brother’s revenge. What bigger reason can you have than that?”

“That’s my business.”

“Keuk...”

His sword began to quiver.

Tap.

He ultimately dropped his sword and fell down to his knees in front of me. I could hear a thick voice coming out from his helmet.

“Would you listen to my story a bit?”

“No. Take this, rip it, and get out of here.”

I handed over the escapee scroll to him.

\*\*\*

[+400]

I sent helmet guy out and got my reward points after about 10 minutes. It was a pretty crappy amount compared to the 10 minutes of hell I went through. I felt kind of ripped off since it was way more than twice as strong as a wolf boss...while only giving me double the reward points.

“You know that no matter what drops...I get a piece of it too right?”

“I know. I’ll pay you with money.”

“I don’t need money. I already have a lot from what you paid me this past month...”

“Then?”

“Buy me dinner. Something expensive.”

“Something like that is easy.”

It wasn't hard to do. And no matter how expensive dinner was, how much could it really be? To think that she would be fine with just that. Good for me. If it wasn't for her buffer, I would have had a real tough time against this monster. I was planning on giving her at least 10%.

If it was just ores, then it wouldn't have been much. But if it was an item, she could have made somewhere upwards of several thousand to several tens of thousands of dollars.

“You promise?”

“I promise. And we can take this opportunity to even invite all of the party members so I can buy something real expensive.”

“Ah really. Are you that slow?”

“What do you mean?”

“Whatever. It's nothing.”

I couldn't figure out why but it seemed like she was really pissed off. Oh well.

It took a long time for the monster to evaporate. Was it because it was a level 4 monster?

After a good and long time, it was finally done. It probably took close to 20 minutes.

Tap.

“Huh? It’s a book?”

“Is it a skillbookk?”

I grabbed the book that had fallen to the ground. It wasn’t a skillbook.



# Chapter 39

---

There were two ways to identify a skillbook. The number that denotes the level of the skill. And a subtle light that glows out of it. The book in my hand had neither of those.

In big lettering, there was written [How to use Combos].

On flipping to the first page, there was a drawing of 2 weapons and 3 ores.

“How to use combos? What’s that?”

“It looks like instructions on how to combine two weapons. What am I supposed to do with this?”

“According to the instructions, you would take two weapons and three monazites..combine them to create a random named item.”

A named item was referring to an item that already had a known name to it – like the bloodysword. To give you another example, the longsword I got from Park Jungbeh is a no name; meaning, it didn’t have a known name attached to it – it was a generic no brand. Nothing really special.

But a named item is different. Just like the bloodysword, a named item usually had a special option attached to it.

Depending on the type of option attached to a named item, the value of it can change proportionately. So I think it would make sense that investing in more valuable ores for the combos would result in a better quality weapon.

“Do you think this really works?”

“I mean, why wouldn’t it?”

It wouldn’t come out of an irregular if it didn’t work. The level 0 skillbook and the escape scroll both...were items that never appeared in the regular system of raids.

I carefully went through the entire book. I needed to carefully estimate just how valuable this book was.

The calculator in my head started tallying.

The level 1 weapons were currently selling for 50,000 dollars. It used to cost about 100,000 but they were listing for half their original price these days. It’ll probably fall even more to about 20-30,000 dollars very soon. I was going to wait until it falls as far as it can so that I can buy two and run some experiments.

“Hmm...it’s weird.”

“What is?”

“Just because something is a named item doesn’t mean it holds the double the value of a regular weapon. Of course if you’re lucky, you might chance on a named item that is several times the value of a regular weapon. But that’s a big “if”. You’re usually lucky if the named item is double the value of a regular item because it’s usually less than that. Just because we can combine two weapons into a named item doesn’t mean scraping up the money to do it is going to be any easy task.”

Plus we needed to take into consideration the cost of the ores as well. Monazites usually ran for 1,000 each. Unfortunately, with the level 1 dungeons disappearing...the price for these had also gone up significantly. They could not easily sell for 1,500 each.

If I were to invest in 3 monazites and 2 weapons, that would cost me upwards of 60,000 dollars. Would a level 1 named item that results from the combo exceed the 60,000 dollars I invest?

“That is hard.”

“Right?”

I flipped to the next page. This time it was instructions on combining armor. It was the same thing as with the weapon but the type of ore was different. It was a bastnazite.

The next page instructed on how to change the option of a named item. The only requirements were 3 ores.

“Hm. This one might be useful.”

“Keep flipping. What if there’s something that will raise the level of a weapon?”

“Hold your horses. That’s what I’m lookinng for too.”

Flip.

They were all similar with just variations in ores and combinations until I flipped to the last chapter. Finally, I came to what I was looking for.

“2 Level 1 weapons and 3 blisolites...?”

“Ah. Isn’t that a pretty expensive ore? It’s also super radioactive...”

“And it’s rare. It’s probably selling for 3,000 dollars so if I have to buy three..that’s 9,000 dollars.”

“But if you think of it as raising the level of your equipment, it’s not too shabby.”

“The problem is, where in the world am I going to buy a blisolite.”

Rare ores were sold by the government. This was because high tech machines were used in extracting the useful elements of the ore. If we didn't have such technology, mankind would probably collapse.

"I guess we have no choice but to get them from the dungeons ourselves."

"It looks like we'll be on a hunt for ores I didn't even give half a thought to in my life."

"All you need for items is money. But something rare...it's easier to get it from the source if we can."

If it meant a level up, buying 2 level 1 named items might not be a bad investment. Because if it was a named + named item...the item the results would most likely be a level 2 named item. That would definitely be worth it.

"It kind of sucks that there's only one way to combo and upgrade to level 2."

That was the last page with any writing on it. The rest of the pages were all blank. What I really needed right now was not a level 2 item but a level 3 item. I was able to realize this after my fight with the level 4 monster.

Of course I still felt confident I would win if I faced the same monster again. But the number one priority in any raid was safety.

I couldn't keep putting myself in unnecessary danger every time I went into a dungeon.

For that reason, it was always better to constantly try and acquire higher level equipment. No. It was important. But even if a level 3 item was a no named item, the cheapest one ran for over 500,000 dollars. If it was a named item, the starting price was 1,000,000 dollars.

In the case of Kim Youngchul who had the Athena's bow, though it was a level 4 weapon...it ran for 2 million dollars. If you thought about an item's price, purchasing it by saving up from dungeon raid earnings was almost impossible. It would take forever to go from one level to another without being from a rich family.

"But then again, there's no reason to rush things. With your current skills, SunbehOppa, you could probably clear level 2 dungeons and profit with about 30,000 dollars in a month. In just one year, that would be about 400,000 dollars so buying level 3 equipment would only be a matter of 3 years. And 30,000 dollars in a month is honestly me being conservative. If you go on raids every three days, you could earn double that.

"You know that hunting in dungeons isn't that simple."

If you were injured or an irregular appeared, then that would complicate things. Especially recently.

"On top of that, I have a feeling we can't stay complacent."

“Why?”

“Who knows if and when the level 2 dungeons will disappear too.”

Nobody knew why the level 1 dungeons had disappeared. Sure, there were theories. But no hard facts. I felt like this was only the beginning of things.

I could almost say with certainty that it had something to do with the level 0 skillbooks. But I didn't know for a fact if this was something only appearing for me or for a select few others too.

Either way, there was no guarantee that this was the end of it.

Now that things had come to this, there was nothing to do but keep climbing up.

\*\*\*

As soon as we exited the dungeon, Eum Hyunjoon and everyone else was on standby waiting for us. I didn't see helmet guy.

“What happened to that guy?”

“He received some treatment from the ward here, and I sent him home afterward. He didn't have any big injuries other than to his neck. But it's a relief that that was the extent of it.”

Hm. I thought I heard a weird sound.

“I’ll do the contribution split and send it to your account. I added in Jong Sawon’s share as well.”

“Jong Sawon?”

“The helmet man’s name is Jong Sawon.”

“Did he say anything else?”

“Not really. He just seemed terribly stricken. But he didn’t say anything outside of that. Why? Did something happen?”

“Not really.”

There was no point in telling him anything and make things weird. And if helmet guy had any conscience, he wouldn’t come to me for the hospital bill either.

Han Joonseok, Cho Youngoo, and manager Kim came this way.

“You killed it?”

“What do you mean?”



“I’m sure you wouldn’t just run in there not to try and kill the monster. My intuition is stellar.”

“Anyway. If you were that curious, you should have followed me in.”

“Well. About that. I had something I had to tend to. Like you asked, I had to take the party members safely outside. You know how much they want to always follow you. Especially that one...”

“Hmm...”

Glasses girl started tearing up after looking up at me.

What. This girl.

Han Joonseok said.

“Ms. Bae Yeongyoung was very worried. I kept telling her nothing bad was going to happen but she wouldn’t believe me.”

“Ha...”

“It’s a relief that you came back safely...sniff.”

I don’t know how to comfort a crying girl. Would she feel better if I hug her head?”

Hug.

“Ah...”

“Thanks for worrying about me.”

“...uh.”

“What?”

“Next time please take me too.”

“Hm?”

“And don’t just take unnie.”

After saying this, she bowed her head down. I could see that her face flushed a bright red color.

“You people! Am I invisible?!”

Jung Sooah yelled out annoyed.

“Ah. You came back too huh?”

“It’s great that you came back safely.”

“Clap clap clap. Congratulations.”

“Manager Kim. Youngoo ajushi. Are you guys really going to be like this? You should be a bit more like Joonseok oppa.”

“Why do you call him oppa and me ajushi?”

“Because Joonseok oppa’s good looking, that’s why.”

“Kya!”

Slam.

When Cho Youngoo ran toward Sooah, he was on the floor in seconds.

“I used to learn judo.”

“Wasn’t it shotput?”

I asked.

“That too.”

“I’m asking you with the utmost seriousness right now. Do you want to take this chance to use real equipment and be a hunter?”

“Will you be coaching me?”

“I don’t think you’d need me to..”

“If you’re going to train me every day then I’ll do it.”

“Well...I guess I could.”

I was being really serious. In cases where we would need her buffer skill, it would be tricky if she had no way of defending herself.

“I’ll do it too.”

Glasses girl said. I nodded my head. I didn’t mind putting in the work if it means raising up the ability of my team members.

# Chapter 40

---

We decided to do our training at the usual park. Since it was the day after we had our normal after-hunt drinking, no one looked like they were in the best condition. But I didn't care. Since this was our first day of training, I wanted to put 1000% into it.

“Do it right.”

“Do I really have to do this?”

“Well if you're never going to fight then I guess not. You can just buy a level 1 armor and walk around with that on. With the right kind of armor, you can get hit a couple of times and still live – probably.”

I said casually towards Jung Sooah – who was chopping up and down repeatedly with her sword. She's been doing this same motion for the last two hours. This was the basics. She needed to learn proper form. Whenever she made the slightest mistake in her form, I lightly hit her with the hilt of my sword at her arms or legs to have her correct it.

It shouldn't have hurt her at all. It should've just made her feel kind of crappy. Like when someone slides their hand across your face slowly. It hurts much less than a slap...but it somehow makes you feel worse. But this was enough to have her correct her posture.

“This isn't right...”

“...Oh well...”

“I mean. You know. If my posture is wrong like this, shouldn’t you help me into the right posture with your hands or something? Right? You know, go behind me, and you know. If you do it like that, isn’t it much better?”

Tap.

“Ow! Look at you hitting me again!”

“No gutter mind while training.”

I did say this but she was very quick at learning. Maybe it was because she was an athlete. But it was more important to fully engrain the basics once you’ve learned it. And she was really taking this tedious work like a champ.

She had the right mindset – for the most part.

Pluck!

Shwing!

“Ah. It veered off course again.”

On the opposite side, glasses girl was aiming her bow and arrow at a makeshift target I had put up for her. It was a practice arrow so it didn't have a sharp end. Since it was a park, you couldn't be too sure that she might accidentally hit an innocent person just strolling through.

Her skill was as crappy as ever. It wasn't like my archery skills were the best, but if her skills were worse than mine – ones I acquired from just taking up archery as a hobby during my college years – that was really bad.

“You said you never took any formal lessons for archery right?”

“Yes.”

“Why did you decide to take up archery then?”

“I got this bow from my older brother.”

“Older brother?”

“Yes. He was a hunter, but he retired because of an injury. He just rests at home for the time being.”

“A retired hunter..seems like it must be a burden to you.”

“Yes. That's why I'm so thankful to you.”

“How about your parents?”

“My father is also a retired hunter.”

“Hm..”

Was she saying that she's the sole provider and support for her crumbling household?

Something sounded not right.

“If your father and your brother were once hunters, how come you never learned archery properly from them?”

“They were both put out of commission from being hunters due to injury, so I think they're worried the same would happen to me. But because the only income is coming from me right now...”

It's not as if I don't completely understand her family's worry. But just because they were worried didn't mean they shouldn't have given her lessons. In this type of situation, the best solution should have been to give her the tools necessary to reduce her risk of injury since she were going to be a hunter no matter what.

“It seems you have your own issues. I'm sorry about that. But that aside, it seems like you haven't been able to focus for a while now.”



“Hm? That, that’s...”

“I don’t know what you’re thinking about but, at this level, you are almost no help to the team at all. It’s only because of Sooah’s buffer skill that you are able to hit your marks. Know that I can only help you so much. Now that we plan on going full force in climbing each level one by one, if you can’t keep up, I’ll have no choice but to drop you from the team.”

“Ok.”

Glasses girl nodded her head as she grasped her bow tight. Her heart was in the right place. No, I could see it in her eyes that she understood. But we’ll see if her will will reflect in her archery.

Pluck!

Whing!

As I continued standing by while the two resume their training, I looked through the How To Combo book again. Since I just browsed through it yesterday, I was planning on looking at it in more detail. I felt like I had overlooked something. But what bothered me the most was that almost half the book was blank.

Since only the first half the book had drawing and instructions in it, why was the rest of it blank.

This was a special item. There was no way that there wasn’t a

reason behind it being blank.

Flip.

First, I looked over the blank pages again. I did look at it yesterday, but you never knew if it changed overnight. Maybe there was something I didn't catch before...

Tap.

I found it.

On the corner of one blank page, there was a very small drawing. That small drawing was of a sword that was an almost exact replica of the bloody sword. But it wasn't just that. Under the bloodysword were drawings of two daggers and three blisolites. The meaning of this drawing was obvious.

You can make a bloodysword by combining two daggers.

I pretty much knew the specs of all the items offered up on the hunter market. Level, price, performance, options...you could say I memorized it all. Put bluntly, I'm sure there's no one else who had as much knowledge of all the items on the market as me. This was due to memorizing and learning about all the items on the market during my years as a porter – when my only dream was to someday become a hunter.

The two daggers pictured under the bloodysword were both level

1 weapons: one was a vampiric dagger and the other was a speed enhancing dagger. Each used to be valued at about 150,000. But they were probably selling for 60,000 dollars now.

“Whew...”

My heart was beating fast.

This book not only told you how to combine items to get you a random item, but it also showed you how to get a specific item.

This meant that I would know if investments made in the separate items will be worth the resulting item.

More specifically, if I just had 3 blisolites (which would cost me 120,000 dollars), then I would be able to produce a 400,000 dollar bloodysword. That was 280,000 profit.

Wait.

I hurriedly flipped to the next page. And I found it.

“Athena’s bow...”

Somewhere in the middle of the Combo book, was a small drawing of Athena’s bow. This was a bow that had the option of not hurting humans.

I need to remain calm.

What was needed to create Athena's bow were the following: a level 3 Valladolid bow and a level 2 white crow pendant. They were, respectively, 800,000 dollars and 500,000 dollars. To be able to create a 2 million dollar items at the cost of 1.3 million dollars. That was 700,000 in profit.

Of course there would also be ores involved in this combo too. The required ore to create this level 4 weapon was elnite. This was something that sold for over 10,000 dollars each...and it was as rare as it was expensive. But as you go up in dungeon levels, the ores that drop also increase in levels. This type of ore would drop occasionally in level 3 dungeons.

Bloodysword and Athena's bow.

There was one thing these two items had in common. They were both weapons that I had used at least once before. Of course the bloodysword is something I use almost everyday, but I had used the Athena's bow only once before when I was trying to catch the attention of a monster.

This meant that every weapon I use will appear in this book. And it will show me what I can do to create it.

The only thing that was a disappointment was that I had never used a level 3 weapon.

“Sooah.”

“What?”

“Do you know of any level 3 hunters by any chance?”

“I do but none that I keep in touch with. They kept asking me out everyday, and I got sick of it.”

“...don’t lie.”

“You don’t know because I never put makeup on around you, but I’m quite a looker if I try.”

“Anyway. My fault for even asking.”

I needed to borrow a level 3 weapon. But there was no one who would let me borrow such an expensive weapon. If only I had a rich friend.

Rich friend?

Kim Youngchul’s face immediately come to the forefront of my mind. Since he was such a nice kid, he might actually listen to my request. But since I haven’t heard a peep from him since that day, he might have quit raids altogether.

And it was kind of bad manners to ask for such a big favor out of the blue.

Ok. Toss that out the window. If I just created a couple bloodswords and sold them, I would have enough money to buy a level 3 weapon myself in no time. There's no such thing as a free favor. I needed to stop trying to take unnecessary shortcuts.

My primary goal was to clear level 2 dungeons.

[0,15,3850]

I closed my eye to check my reward points.

My current abilities were: strength – 200, endurance – 150, reflex – 150, focus – 150, and defense – 100. If I used Jung Sooah's buffer, that would increase all of them even more.

Her buffer skill would raise each ability by about 20%, and the option that she could only use once a day for 10 minutes would raise each ability by about 50%. With this, it was more than enough to clear a level 2 dungeon.

I thought about how I should use the remaining reward points and decided on increasing my stamina and defense.

The reason why I had decided on the two was because I was lacking in these two areas the most during my fight with the level 4 monster. If I were just running, then I could keep it up for 2 hours. But 10 minutes into a full on fight...that was enough to wear

me out. This was because fighting a monster much bigger than me required me to run around, dodge, and jump a lot. And then getting hit that one time was enough to almost take me out of the fight. Luckily the fight was done by that time. But this meant I needed to have better defense.

[0,17,350]

Raising my stamina from 150 to 200 cost me 2,000 points, and raising my defense from 100 to 150 cost me 1,500 points. So in total, I spent 3,500 points to raise those two abilities.

“Huff. Huff.”

I collapsed onto the ground and tried to catch my breath. I spent 1 hour being Jung Sooah’s personal sandbag and the next 2 hours running around the park. But I didn’t mind. Improving myself like this didn’t cost me a dime.

“Mr. Jeon Sangmin?”

A voice interrupted my thoughts. It was a familiar voice. Who was it?

# Chapter 41

---

Deep scars, muscular physique, and an all too familiar voice. It was a face I've never seen before, but I knew who it was.

I got up from the ground as I said.

“How did you find me here? Mr. Jong Sawon.”

[TN: Jong Sawon is helmet guy...in case you guys don't remember.]

“So you recognized me.”

“Well, I never knew your face since you always had that helmet on, but I could tell by your voice.”

“Ah. Is this man helmet man? Didn't he go to the hospital ward?”

“I was able to check out fairly quickly. I just had a basic physical done to make sure there was nothing seriously wrong.”

“That's a relief. That you weren't seriously injured.”

“So why did you come find me? If you came to ask me to pay for your hospital bills or to fight me in the name of your brother...I don't have time for any of that, I'll tell you right now.”



“That isn’t why I’m here.”

“Then?”

“My overall impression of helmet guy wasn’t bad at all. When I had first met him and Eum Hyunjoon at Baekoonsa dungeon, we had good fighting chemistry. I thought we got along fairly well. He didn’t have a bad personality either. It was just that one incident with the irregular that left a bad taste.

“Can I join your party please?”

“What?”

That was not what I was expecting. And it wasn’t an appealing offer to me either. Maybe he read that in my expression because then he said.

“There will not be a repeat of the incident from the last time.”

“How am I supposed to trust that? And I think you mentioned this at that last incident. That you didn’t have long to live. Do you have some kind of illness or something?”

“Terminal cancer. I have about 6 months left. If I undergo treatment, they said that I can extend it a bit more...but that’s not a route I want to take.”

“Thank you for being honest, but...”

Is he saying that since he's dying anyway, he'd rather do it while killing a monster? That kind of an attitude is not at all helpful in a party. Why? Because a person on the cusp of death is selfish. Even if they were the more giving and altruistic person in the world, when death is at their front step...all they can think about is themselves.

If I allow that type of person into my party and something happens, it would only hurt us.

“Why don't you go and ask Eum Hyunjoon? Aren't you on better terms with him?”

“I came to you after already being rejected by him. It's probably for the same reason you are thinking right now.”

“If you just came to me as a last resort, then I can only give you the same answer.”

In one way, you had to respect the guy for his brutal honesty.

Shwing~

Jong Sawon drew his sword. Jung Sooah and glasses girl stepped back and stared at him with wary looks. I raised my hand to calm them before taking the sword he was now handing over to me.

This...I've seen this before.

“This is a level 3 Rubicon sword. From what I can remember, this has a value of 700,000 dollars. But how did you...”

“I purchased it with the money from my brother's life insurance and from selling the house.”

So he was trusting in this sword when he went to fight the level 4 monster. Since he only had a level 1 sword when I had first met him, he must have purchased this in between that time.

“A level 3 weapon...”

If I said I didn't feel a bit of sway from this new turn of events, I would be lying. And this man would be dying soon. Since he sold his house and used the entirety of his brother's insurance money on this sword, that meant he probably didn't have any family left.

That meant if he died, then the probability of this sword coming into my possession was very high. When I realized that the direction of my thoughts flowed so easily in that sequence, I instantly started hating myself for it. How could I be so calculating with a man who was on his way to his deathbed?

But this was a level 3 weapon. Even if I didn't inherit it later down the road, getting it to appear in my Item Fusion book would still be a great asset. The only thing I had to do was include him in

my party.

What to do? It wasn't a bad choice no matter what I decided to do.

All of a sudden, Jong Sawon dropped to his knees in front of me.

“What are you doing? I really hate this kind of thing. Please get up.”

“I'll promise you one thing if you just accept me into your party. I will always listen to any order you make. Though I can only ask you to trust me when I say this. I only need one chance.

“I can't understand why you are going so far as to beg me like this. If you have a level 3 weapon, can't you just make your own party?”

“I don't think I could create a party that is capable enough to kill that level of monster.”

“Ok. Let's say that another irregular appears. If I order a retreat, what will you do?”

“...That is the only order I cannot obey.”

So his word changes already. No, he's probably saying he will do everything I say except this one thing.

Stubborn. Well...stubborn and determined people can turn out useful...but can also be disastrous.

I lightly sighed and nodded my head.

“Fine.”

“Fine? You’ll accept my answer even with that one exception?”

“I wasn’t going to believe you if you said you would obey my order of retreat anyway. But I do have one condition.”

“Name it.”

“If you ever ignore a command or order from me and do whatever you feel like doing, know that I will not follow you or try and save you like I did last time.”

If I couldn’t control him, I just didn’t have to. It was enough to have stopped him from suicide one time.

Jong Sawon nodded his head.

“Oh yeah. And one more thing.”

“What is it?”

“That sword. Let me try using it once.”

I tried wielding the sword and swinging it about a few times, but it didn't appear in the Item Fusion book. That only brought me to one conclusion. I needed to use a weapon on an actual monster for it to appear in the book.

Since we had decided to leave the mercenary team, we needed to pick another dungeon to raid.

I thought over all the dungeons in my database and chose a select few that would be the best fit for us.

The closest dungeon among those was none other than the Bookhansan dungeon.

This dungeon was originally known for being popular with the leisure parties. This was because the terrain was plain and open, and it was usually full of fairly easy to defeat monsters such as goblins and orks.

[Sun[SunbehOppa! Jackpot!]]Just as I was thinking all of this, there was a special news report.

All the ores that came out of dungeons were, by practice, managed by the country. And the news was now reporting that they will be reducing the reservation raid time in a dungeon from 4 hours to 2 hours.

This was because since the level 1 dungeons had disappeared, it had directly impacted the already dwindling country's ore supply. They were probably aiming to increase the turnover rate in the dungeons to boost ore gathering.

“That's not jackport. Stupid. That's bad. If it's two hours, that means our raid time is reduced by half.”

And if you clear a dungeon in 2 hours, an irregular would appear. And, like what happened last time, it might appear even if we didn't clear the dungeon. This could only mean that clearing a dungeon quickly wasn't the trigger. The actual trigger, more specifically, was the rate at which you went through the dungeon.

And if you clear a dungeon in 2 hours, an irregular would appear. In that instant, I just realized another clue to the irregulars from what happened last time. Since the level 4 monster appeared even if when didn't clear the dungeon, that meant that clearing a dungeon quickly wasn't the trigger. The actual trigger, more specifically, was the rate at which you went through the dungeon.

[Hey, at least they're reducing the admission fees.]“30 percent? Since they're cutting our raid time in half, shouldn't they be cutting our admissions in half too?”

[That is true. But it's better than nothing.]“Hm...I guess I could look on the bright side...”

Previously, since the dungeons were always so booked in

advanced that no matter how quickly you reserved a spot, you could only do a raid every three days. But with this new change, we would probably be able to go hunting once every two days...or maybe even once a day if we got lucky. If none of us get injured, we could potentially earn much more.

[And they also say that leisure parties will be allowed again.]“Looks like they’re desperate.”

It hasn’t even been 3 months since the last incident. For them to allow leisure parties to resume so quickly was a considerable risk. For the government, known to hate taking on unnecessary responsibility, to burden themselves with this risk...meant that there was considerable pressure from the business community from that lack of minerals and ores.



## Chapter 42

---

There were a lot of people gathered in front of the Northern Mountain dungeon. The crowd was a mix of people ready to climb the mountain and hunters about to enter the dungeon. Carrying the heavy armor and equipment on top of the huge backpack just to get to a bus stop was no easy feat.

“Do I need to buy a car...”

I began to think of the van that we had taken to the Baeksapyoung dungeons.

Maybe I should have just called Cho Youngoo to pick me up.

“SunbehOppa!”

I could hear Jung Sooah’s loud voice yelling for me. She caught up to me in almost one leap and bowed to try and catch her breath.

“How can the party head be the last one to get here?”

“Sorry. There was a bit of traffic on the way. But didn’t I still get here earlier than the appointed time?”

“I guess. But did you know that manager Kim was the first one to get here today?”

“Well, it’s because I told him to get here by 4.”

“Ha? So then he was actually 30 minutes late?”

“Yah. But I guess now he’ll start catching on that I’ve been purposely giving him an earlier time than everyone else.”

“You think so?”

“If not, then that’s better for me. Let’s hurry on up. If we’re late, that means the time we get to spend in the dungeon will be that much shorter.”

Northern Mountain dungeon, even though it was a level 2, was known to be a relatively easy dungeon to clear. But we still needed to keep our guard up. If our time in the dungeons is reduced to 2 hours, that means we will be forced to clear the dungeon faster... resulting in a higher probability of an irregular appearing.

Even though there were 7 of us, since 2 of us in the group were porters, we just needed to pay a smaller extra fee for admissions instead of a full hunter’s price.

The inside of the dungeon was deathly quiet. The cave’s walls were a red color and, unlike limestone caves, were completely dry. Since the dungeon ran in a straight path, there was no way for someone to get lost. After a simple briefing with the team, we went ahead to start our hunt.

Because monsters don't usually appear in the passageways, there was no reason for us to be nervous just yet.

After walking for about 5 minutes, we came to the first room. Taking into consideration the new reduced raid time, in order for us to clear the entire dungeon, we had to clear each of the 7 rooms in less than 3 minutes. There were 5 small orks. Looks like a pretty large count for the first batch.

Manager Kim did his sleep spell first. As a golden beam began to glow, two orks fell into slumber. After hustling from one raid to the other while working with the mercenary team for a month, it looked like he made some improvements.

“Mr. Cho Youngoo! You think you can handle it?”

“I'll try!”

“Mr.. Cho Youngoo! To the right! Mr. Jong Sawon! To the left!”

“Roger!”

Piping!

An arrow flew into the air.

Each of us took on an ork from the three running toward us in a

straight line. Since there was no reason for us to drag on the time, we tried to finish them off as soon as possible.

After I parried my opponent's attack twice in a row, it began to try and use brute force. Orks were known to try and use strength as their main focus when attacking. But, including Sooah's buff, my strength was at about 240%.

Can I beat it?

“Wow!”

There's a reason why orks were known for their strength. No matter how much strength I put into it, I couldn't overpower it.

But fighting wasn't always about strength or power.

I suddenly relaxed to catch it off guard and moved to its side. My surprising move had pushed the or off balance for a quick moment.

I couldn't let this opportunity pass by.

I stabbed my bloodsword into its carotid artery and sliced across.

[+200]

After confirming that I got my reward points, I went over to where Cho Youngoo was fighting his own ork.

Cho Youngoo was just barely holding on. It had probably been only about 30 seconds since we started our fight. But having been able to stay in the fight for this long was worthy of praise.

“Haa!”

I yelled out as I ran toward Cho Youngoo’s foe. Though it had an arrow stuck in its shoulder and leg, my yell must have surprised it because it threw its hand ax in my direction.

I barely dodged the flying weapon and stabbed out with my own longsword.

The blade passed right into the ork’s body. My level 1 longsword was able to pierce the hide of a level 2 monster.

The ork started coughing up blood as it held onto its bleeding side and stepped back.

Shwing! Shwing!

Another two arrows flew and burrowed themselves into the ork’s body. Though they weren’t fatal attacks, they were enough to cause damage. The ork’s defense was definitely lower than most other level 2 monsters.

I swung my longsword in the ork's direction and ran right at it.

My longsword pieced nearly halfway into the monster. My armor did sustain some damage, but this was nothing. Then Cho Youngoo took his own sword and stabbed it into the now immobile ork.

Though the ork flopped about from the impact of the stab, it didn't sustain a big wound this time. It looks like even though his sword was the same level as mine, the level of damage also depends on the person making it.

I guess I needed to start getting ready for the finale.

I grabbed the hilt of my sword and shoved it all the way through this time, and the ork fell to the ground. When Cho Youngoo tried to follow my example and go in for the kill, I held him back.

“Wait a second.”

“What?...Why...”

“I still have something I need to use it for.”

I looked back at the helmet guy. The ork he had been fighting against was also collapsed on the ground with wounds all over. A level 3 weapon is a level 3 for good reason, it seems.

The rubicon sword. Compared to other swords, it had a relatively narrow and long blade. Just a glance at the item made you feel like it would be easy to break in half, but of course this was not true. It had a special option of increasing the wielder's reflex by 50%. All you had to do was use the sword.

“Mr. Jong Sawon. Can you please let me borrow the sword for a quick moment?”

“You mean right now?”

“Yes.”

Helmet guy nodded his head and handed over his weapon.

The ork began to squirm violently on the ground as it gurgled out. It knew what was coming. The weird sounds coming from its mouth are said to be the ork's language. But no one ever really took the time to study it, so there wasn't anyone who could understand it.

I grabbed the hilt of the rubicon sword and walked slowly to the ork.

As soon as I swung, the monster's body cut cleanly in half. The long blade made it easy to cut all the way through.

After cutting through the remaining 2 sleeping orks as well, I returned the sword. As we waited for the monsters to evaporate, I

pulled out my Item Fusion book.

Would I be right?

Flip.

“It’s really there, huh?”

Jung Sooah had snuck up behind me at some point and asked. Just as she pointed out, there was now a small drawing of the rubicon sword in the book.

It required a level 2 sword and a level 1 agility sword.

When I calculated the cost of the materials required, it came out to about 400,000 dollars. I could come up with that kind of money if I just created a bloodysword and sold it two times.

I just needed to gather the required ores now.

From the 5 orks we had killed, 3 ores dropped to the ground. Two of them were monazites and one was a bastnazite.

“Boo.”

“There’s still a bunch of monsters left.”



“Party head.”

Han Joonseok said as he walked up to me. He was someone that I now knew not to say any unnecessary words. If he said something, that meant it would be pretty important.

“What is it?”

“Is there really a need for us to waste time like this...waiting for the monsters to evaporate? If we don't need to rest, wouldn't it make sense for us to kill the monsters and keep going?”

“That...is true.”

I nodded my head.

The most time consuming thing in a raid was waiting for the monsters to evaporate. If there were 7 rooms in all, 70 minutes would have been spent just waiting for the items to drop. What if we just kept going and collected the drops as we came back out? Why didn't I think of this?

# Chapter 43

---

If we didn't wait for the monsters to evaporate after every kill and just went on to the next room, we would definitely save a lot of time. Items and ores wouldn't disappear unless the dungeon reset itself so there was no danger of losing anything either.

The more I thought about it, the more I liked the idea.

“Ok then. From now on, unless there is anyone with injuries, we'll be going straight from one room to the next. Manager Kim. Please keep track of your spell reset time. We want to make sure that no matter how fast we move, we slow down enough for your spell to work each time.

“Don't worry. The sleep spell works again after 5 minutes so there shouldn't be any real issues.”

“That's good.”

Jung Sooah started to grab the ores to put into her backpack.

The next room had 20 goblins.

“What the hell? Why are there so many monsters in here?”

Manager Kim started mumbling.

“Aren’t those goblins level 1 monsters? They look familiar.”

Jung Sooah asked. I nodded my head.

“You’re right. From their size and the look of them, they are definitely level 1 goblins.”

“I’m asking because I haven’t been in too many level 2 dungeons...but does this happen often?”

“This is a first for me too. It could be that since the level 1 dungeons disappeared, all those monsters ended up in other level dungeons...but in greater than usual numbers.”

“Is that good or bad?”

“It’s good. Because level 1 monsters drop ores too. And our government is experiencing a shortage right now.”

I drew my sword. 20 goblins. If even just half of them dropped ores, that would mean we would end up with 10. Not only was this good for our economy...but I needed ores right now.

“Manager Kim.”

“Ok. Leave it to me. I’ll put to sleep at least 10 of them.”

When Manager Kim cast his spell, a golden glow arose.

Five of them had fallen asleep.

“Ha?”

“Well. Even that is a good amount. Mr. Cho Youngoo, please help with the attack. Sooah.”

“Yeah?”

“Hold onto this.”

I threw the longsword I had been holding in my right hand.

“Huh? Why...”

“You need a weapon to at least defend yourself with. You remember how to use a sword right?”

“How about you?”

“This one sword is enough for me.”

I grabbed the bloodysword in my right hand. I could heard Jung Sooah mumbling behind me.

“So damn hot...”

“..oh my god. Stop.”

I could hear Manager Kim snickering.

Shit. I could feel my face turning red.

[+100]

I swiped up at the goblin running toward me and tossed his body over my shoulder. Helmet guy was assisting me to my left and swinging out with his sword too. Jung Sooah and Cho Youngoo were standing behind us, blocking the exit, and Han Joonseok and glasses girl were shooting arrows out from behind all of us.

Ping! Ping!

Two of the goblins were struck by an arrow each on their foreheads and fell to the ground. Han Joonseok had improved his archery skills, but I was even more surprised by how much glasses girl had improved her aim.

At that moment, two goblins ran to attack me at the same time. One came from above me and the other right in front of me.

How dare you.

I grabbed the one in front of me by the neck and threw it up into the air.

It crashed into the other one coming from above and both fell to the ground.

[+100] [+100]

What? They died with just that?

I never imagined I had gotten this strong. But I could now see just how much I had improved after meeting a level 1 monster again. Damn.

[+100]

With one hit, another goblin crumbled as easily as tofu.

Helmet guy was also killing goblins left and right as if it were the easiest thing.

The goblins, with their short reach, were not able to do anything against the long blade of the rubicon sword.

“That’s a damn good sword.”

“If you need it, I’ll give it to you.”

“That’s not what I meant. Well, it’s as good as mine anyway at

this point.”

“What...”

“Let’s talk later.”

Well, I was the one who brought it up. But there was no reason for me to explain anything to him, right?

I stabbed a goblin through the eye with my bloodysword.

It didn’t take us even 3 minutes to kill all 20 level 1 goblins. In fact the not even one goblin made it past us to where Cho Youngoo and Sooah were standing.

“Wow...SunbehOppa. You’re amazing. Really.”

“Isn’t it about time for you to work on fixing that bad habit of complimenting me every few seconds? You’re not that kind of a porter anymore.”

“Ah. But I’m being serious right now.”

“Anyway. Just hand over the sword.”

“Weren’t you gifting this to me?”

“I just let you borrow it in case you might get hurt.”

“Pft. And for a second I felt a flutter of happiness there.”

Sooah handed the sword back to me. I guess if you came right down to it, handing over a sword like this to her wasn't something that was all that difficult. And if I considered the value she brought to the party, it was not a bad trade.

But if people start getting something for free, then they start to rely on the giver. Though she was a valuable member of my party, I also didn't want her to rely on me too much.

What I needed was a team member. Not a follower.

“Nothing in life is free. If you keep wanting free things, you'll start losing hair.”

“Sh. Manager Kim might hear you.”

“I'm not bald ok. I just have fine hair.”

Manager Kim turned a bright red as he mumbled quietly.

“Let's hurry onto the next room. Is that ok Mr. Jong Sawon?”

“No problem.”



He did look a bit tired, but not enough where it would hinder his fighting.

We immediately set out for the next room in the dungeon.

Then to the next room. And then to the next room.

It had taken us about a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes to clear 7 rooms. We did rest a bit in between, but none of us had sustained any injuries.

The dungeon remained dark. That meant the dungeon didn't clear...an irregular would be appearing.

We had been taking a break when I spoke aloud to my party members.

"Everyone stay on alert. Looks like we're not done yet."

"Again?"

"What do you mean again?"

Helmet guy asked Manager Kim.

"The monster you've been waiting for just might appear. Be

prepared.”

“No...you mean an irregular?”

“Yes. But we don’t know what it is that might appear.”

I started to move my shoulders up and down to keep it warmed up. If it was like what usually happened, it would appear near the dungeon exit...but you never knew. Since the dungeon was in a straight line, it didn’t matter too much where it appeared.

Scrapppppe!

It was then we heard a scraping sound along the ground somewhere.

This was ominous. A thought that this would not be an easy monster popped up in my head.

“Everyone get ready for battle. Something is heading our way.”

“What’s that sound?”

Cho Youngoo covered his ears as he asked.

Scrape scrape scrappee!

This wasn't the sound of a particularly large monster. It sounded more like a monster that was dragging or pushing something along. Glasses girl started to shiver.

“This...this...is this...”

“Shit!”

We looked to where the sound came from. The sound that, at first, seemed quite a distance away was now getting all the closer.

Click click click click!

This was the sound of many legs tapping along the ground. Just the sound was enough to induce goosebumps along your skin. They were the sound of bugs' legs.

I knew then what it was. It was a monster most hunters dreaded meeting.

A level 3 monster – The Great Roach.

So. It was a giant bug.

From the sound of it, it wasn't even just one or two. To think that the irregular this time would be this monster.

“Shit.”

All the things I had brought in preparation for an irregular would prove to be of no use this time around. What we needed to go up against these monsters was something flammable to light up...and a lot of it. If we didn't have at least 20 liters of flammable liquid, it was no use.

We had no choice but to try and kill them one at a time.

“SunbehOppa! What is it?”

“What do you mean?! They're bugs!”

“Kyaa!”

“Don't make girly noises and stand back!”

Jong Sawon and I moved up to the front. I don't know if the two of us would be able to hold them back, but we needed to at least try.

The first Great Roach finally reared its ugly head.

It was probably about 1 meter in length. It had a hard outer shell that was probably as strong as hunter grade armor, and its attack was based on grabbing a hold of its opponent and biting chunks out of them with its sharp pincer teeth. A regular roach's bite is 5

times stronger than a human's. I didn't want to even imagine the damage this thing could do.

So why are they level 3 monsters?

Because they never appear alone.

Click click click click!

Behind the first roach were about 20 or more click clicking their way toward us.

Ah...I really hate them. I feel like I'll see them in my nightmares.

# Chapter 44

---

Click click click!

“Ha!”

I kicked at it hard while trying to suppress my disgust.

Its head lifted up to reveal its stomach – its weak point.

I pushed my longsword right in and a sticky liquid squirted out.

Ugh. All over my hands.

[+10]

Even the reward points sucked. So that means I would get enough level 3 reward points from killing 30 of these. In reality, they usually roam around in packs of around 30. I guess that meant about 30 of them in a group was the actual level 3 monster we were going up against.

“The monster’s shell is very hard and sturdy. If you can, try to flip it over...”

As soon as helmet guy swung with his sword, the roach’s shell split in half and spewed out more gunk.

“....wow...that sword is really nice...”

“Do you want it?”

“Just make sure you kill them all.”

He keeps saying this, and now I can't tell if he's being serious or joking around.

Shwing!

An arrow hit one of the Great Roaches and bounced right off. It was Han Joonseok.

“Don't shoot arrows! They won't do anything!”

“Shit. Ok then.”

His skill and equipment level were both level 1s. There was no way he could do anything to the Great Roach's tough armor-like back.

I'm sure just watching isn't easy but that was the only thing he could do to help at this point.

Helmet guy and I kept at it to keep all them from getting past us.

“Ah?”

I noticed one guy trying to make it past us by crawling on the ceiling. The top of the dungeon was about 3 meters above us. I hurriedly ran over.

And in that moment, one roach squeezed through below me.

Ah crap.

But I couldn't do anything. If I ran back to try to get that one, it would create an opening for the rest of the roaches. I could hear the click click click of the crowd of roaches trying to make it past us both.

In the brief instant I had jumped to get the roach on the ceiling, I realized there weren't the 20-30 some roaches I had initially guessed. It was more like over a hundred.

“One went through!”

“I saw!”

I yelled back at Cho Youngoo.

Compared to usual level 3 monsters, the Great Roach was not that strong. But it was too much for the rest of the party members to fight.



Would they be able to kill the one roach between the four of them?

“We got it!”

I heard Cho Youngoo yell out.

What?

“How?”

I yelled out as I kicked away a roach trying to bite into my leg.

“Unni grabbed it and flipped it over!”

“Ah. Don’t tell him like that. You’re ruining my plan of trying to act demure.”

“It looks like we can kill at least one or two!”

At Han Joonseok’s words, I let out a sigh of relief. Sooah. Good job.

Click click click click click!

The hoard of Great Roaches kept pushing. I probably killed at least 20 of them and helmet guys probably did the same. But there were still roaches as far as the eye could see – it felt as if their number didn't go down a bit.

“Damn. Just how many of them are there?”

Helmet guy asked.

“They usually roam around in groups of 30. Considering it's an irregular, I'd say we can safely assume there will be several hundred of them.”

“I'm sorry....I don't think I can make it through all that...”

I couldn't see his face, but his voice sounded very worn.

Since he was terminally ill, there was no way he'd be in peak condition. But if he dropped out now, then that would open the floodgates...and we'd be doomed. There was no way I could block an opening of several meters by myself.

But that didn't mean I could force him to keep fighting either. If he was saying something like this in the middle of a fight, that meant he was at his wit's end.

At that moment, I got a great idea.

“Mr. Cho Youngoo!”

“Yes!”

“Please switch off with Mr. Jong Sawon!”

“Ah! Ok!”

Cho Youngoo hurriedly ran up behind helmet guy. After swinging his sword several times, he switched positions with Cho Youngoo and handed off his sword so that he could rest for a bit while Cho Youngoo took up the slack.

Cho Youngoo was able to sustain just as much damage to the roaches with the rubicon sword.

“Don’t use up all of your energy in the beginning. We still have a lot left!”

“Ha ha! I’m sorry! I just go excited because I was getting bored just watching from the back!”

The Great Roaches were persistent, but Cho Youngoo and I were just as adamant in holding them back. The bloodysword started turning a yellowish tint. I guess after sucking up their goo, it was changing colors. It was kind of gross to look at, but I could tell it’s attack power did go up. It was now able to pierce through the Great Roach’s tough shell.

“Wheww.”

“If you’re having a hard time, we can switch off again.”

“We can switch off after I fight a little more.”

Shortly after, Cho Youngoo handed the sword back to helmet guy. We continued this for twenty minutes.

“Whew. Whew.”

My arms were now starting to shake. I was almost at my limit too.

“Are you ok?”

Helmet guy asked me.

“I’m starting to lose strength in my arms, it seems.”

“Why don’t you switch off with Mr. Cho Youngoo too?”

Stab!

This time the Roach’s guts splattered into my face. An

overwhelming stench filled my nose and I could taste bitterness in my mouth.

“You don’t have to worry about me.”

“But...”

“I just need to put in more effort...”

“What?”

I could hear the confusion in helmet guy’s voice.

Instead of answering, I just closed my left eye.

I had started out with 350 reward points, earned 3,500 before meeting the Great Roaches, and killed 72 of these bastards.

[0,17,4570]

I was fine. No need to worry.

Because the more I was pushed, the more I would improve.

The bodies of Great Roaches were now piled up enough to block the passageway. I didn’t really check, but I probably killed about 200 of them by myself.

And during that time, I increased my endurance two times – and was now at about 300%.

[0,19,30]

This was the result of 40 minutes of hell. I had increased my endurance one time, and just as I was about to pass out, I upped my endurance one more time and used up almost the rest of my reward points.

Though I was technically at 300% of my endurance, if I included Sooah's buff...I was actually at 360% right now. If I were to enter a marathon right now, I would probably be able to easily win the gold.

No, I would probably win even against a horse.

“Haa. Haa.”

Cho Youngoo huffed and puffed as he fell to the ground on his back. Helmet guy also fell to the ground as he took off his helmet. The three of us were covered in sweat – it almost looked like we just came out of the shower.

“Ah...”

Han Joonseok suddenly let out a sigh. When everyone looked his way, he said.

“Party head. There’s a problem.”

“It’s fine as long as you don’t say another irregular showed up.”

“That’s not it...”

He pointed to his watch.

“Two hours have passed.”

“Ha....we’re screwed.”

“So...what happens if we go over our time?”

Glasses girl asked. It seemed she didn’t know because she didn’t have a lot of dungeon experience.

“We have to pay for the entrance fee for the next party that was not able to enter the dungeon at their appointed time on top of a penalty. It’ll come out to about 3 times the entrance fee – about 10,000 dollars.”

“Ahh...that sucks.”

Jung Sooah cringed.

“But it’s fine. We were able to come up on a lot of ores. So we’re

not out by too much money. And on top of that...”

I pointed to the dead bodies of the Great Roaches that were leaking yellow fluid.

Yuck...I didn't notice while we were fighting, but looking at it now made me queasy.

“Once they evaporate, I'm sure something will come out. Let's just wait.”

After about 10 minutes, the bodies had fully evaporated and dropped ores in its place. I had hoped that at least one item would drop...but they were all ores.

But I wasn't unhappy. No. It was better it turned out this way.

“SunbehOppa! This!”

Jung Sooah pointed to a silver colored ore that was sparkling on the ground.

It was the blisolnite I needed to create a level 2 equipment with the Item Fusion book.

“Don't touch it.”



“Duh. I’m a certified porter too ok? I know.”

She let out a huff with her nose and pulled out a silver colored bag. It was a bag used to safely handle radioactive items.

“It’s another blisolnite!”

“There’s an ansilite too!”

“And another blisolnite! Three of them!”

We hit ore jackpot. Having killed level 3 monsters, especially a whole slew of them, it looked like we lucked out on rare ores. What uncanny timing.

In all we came up on 7 monazites, 6 bastnazites, 3 blisolnites, and 1 ansilnite.

“Hmmm...”

“Put the blisolnites and ansilnite into my backpack. We can’t sell those.”

“Ok.”

As we were packing up the ores, we heard a voice coming from somewhere.

“Shit. Did they all die or something you think?”

“If they died, the dungeon would have reset.”

“Our reservations got screwed up because of some stupid idiots...”

We all looked to where the voices were coming from.

A party of 6 people could be seen coming in – and they were not holding back on any of the cuss words.

Then they stopped midwalk.

“Huh?”

# Chapter 45

---

“You guys are fine?”

They looked our way with clear annoyance in their faces.

“You retards over there. If you guys are done clearing the damn dungeon, shouldn’t you get the hell out!”

“What the hell are you going on about. Dumb little shits.”

Manager Kim started cursing aloud as his face turned a bright shade of red. Then I could see him sneaking a look at me to see if it was ok to say that.

If he was going to do that, he should have stayed quiet from the start. This man.

“Hey old man. You’re pretty good at cursing. Are you the boss? You realize you messed up our reservation? What are you going to do about it?”

The biggest guy in the group took a step forward. From the looks of it, he was a tanker. He had on a no name level 3 armor, and I couldn’t really tell what sword he carried just from looking at the scabbard. But based on everyone else’s equipment, everything they carried was at least a level 3.

In other words, these guys were not a general party.

You could tell if a group was a general party. Because you could smell the desperation in wanting to earn as much money as humanly possible on them. That was their main goal. They were not the type of people who would enter a level 2 dungeon with level 3 equipment.

“Something came up and we lost track of time. We will make sure to pay the penalty, so please step outside. We will follow shortly.”

“Penalty? It’s not as if we’re going to see any of it so what does that have to do with us?”

“It’s my understanding that you are reimbursed a part of the penalty fee.”

I explained calmly. It wasn’t as if I didn’t know they were purposely trying to provoke us to try and get a rise out of us.

But this situation was different from the time with Park Jungbeh.

I was now responsible for more people than just myself. The reason why it was easier when I had to just deal with Jungbeh that time was because if something happened, it would have only resulted in hot water for me.

This was different. Whatever happened now would affect the lives of six more people besides myself.

“Whatever. On our way here, we noticed a bunch of dropped items. We’ll be taking those. Just know that.”

“Why are you deciding that on your own?”

“Because we feel like it. We lost out on something so we’re recouping our losses. Isn’t that right?”

Tanker guy walked up closer to me. When I gave a frown, he smirked.

“Look at this guy. He looks like he just might have a temper.”

“Is that the bag you put our ores in?”

“Yeah. But you know what? You even had a level 2 item drop. Keu keu keu.”

At those words, everyone’s face in our party turned dark. If it was a level 2 item, it was worth at least 200 to 300,000 dollars. He was saying he would be taking that from right under our noses.

“That’s...”

“Lucky. If I didn’t come in, we wouldn’t have picked up on such a thing.”

Tanker guy gave a big ugly grin. It seemed, even though he was part of a leisure party, that he was in great spirits for being able to come up on a free item like that.

It was a fact that people with money were even more greedy for it.

“What will you do if I said we needed it back?”

“What will I do? Are you asking as if you don’t know the answer you idiot?”

He pulled out his sword. From the pattern, I could tell it was the Honcheon Sword. It had an explosive damage ability as an option. The value was at around 800,000 dollars.

That meant his equipment and skill was all a level 3.

I wonder if I could beat him at my current ability.

I needed to be able to win without there being any casualties or serious injuries. Would that be possible?

It would certainly not be easy.

At least over 20 ores and a level 2 item was on the line. Though it was a shame to throw them away, I recognized that that was the best option.

“...let’s leave.”

“It looks like you understand the situation.”

“Let’s go, everyone.”

I said as I walked to my party. Though they were all unhappy with the situation, they followed my order. They knew why I had decided to do this.

I was barely able to contain my anger. But I kept it down. All those years as a porter...I could handle this much.

Then tanker guy spoke.

“Oh yeh. And leave your equipment too.”

“...what did you say?”

“Don’t make me say it twice. I said to leave your equipment and buzz off. I was about to kill you guys but decided not to after seeing all your dropped shit so be thankful I’m leaving you with your lives. Leave your equipment there and live your lowly level 2 lives. Think of it as a gift from me.”

“Look at Jungpal getting started again ke ke ke.”

“Hey that guy over there. He has a level 3 sword. We could probably sell it for a good amount.”

Tanker guy pointed at helmet guy and smiled.

Were they planning on doing this from the start?

“Ah ah. I get it now.”

“What?”

“It’s protocol for the dungeon manager to be the one to determine what happens when you go over your time. So I thought it was weird that you guys were the ones to come in. Which means you purposely came in just to lay claim on our items after turning away the dungeon manager.”

“Bastard. You got a good head on your shoulders. So what? That doesn’t change shit. Are you going to go out and tell on us? How will anyone knows what happened in here? We could just kill you on the spot and say you guys died while hunting.”

Tanker guy said this while tapping lightly on my cheek.

I could hear something deep inside me snap.



But I remained calm. It was important to stay calm.

“Keuk.”

Tanker guy fell to his knees as blood started spilling out from his neck.

Right before he died, I pulled out the sword from his scabbard.

This was what I had decided.

I couldn't say it any other way.

I had killed a person.

[+300]

Reward points?

I'll worry about that later.

“What, what the hell? What the hell did that bastard just do?”

“He stabbed Jungpal! That crazy bastard!”

Four out of the five guys behind Jungpal's now dead body drew their swords. The remaining guy was probably a porter.

“Mr. Cho Youngoo!”

“Yes? Yes!”

Cho Youngoo hurriedly answered me.

“Protect everyone. Mr Jong Sawon, feel free to move about as needed. If you don't want to dirty your hands, you can go to the back.”

“Just give me an order, and I will follow it.”

Helmet guy pulled free his sword and stepped forward.

There was no hesitation. I was starting to like him.

“Kill them!”

The level 3 enemies ran toward us.

I held the Honcheon sword in my right hand and the bloodysword in my left.

Not bad.

“SunbehOppa.”

I’ll be honest.

I dreaded what she might be thinking of me at this moment.

“Kill those pieces of shit! NO MERCY!”

A blinding light began to shine above my head.

“Keuk.”

I let out a laugh. To think that I would have people on my side even in a situation like this. I was so grateful.

\*\*\*

The impact of my Honcheon sword against my enemy’s armor sent his head flying into the air. Seems he trusted in his level 3 armor too much. Too bad it wasn’t enough to save his life. He departed from the world without even being able to let out one final scream.

“What, what the hell? Why is this bastard so fast?”

“Shut up and just attack!”

Only three were left. Helmet guy was fighting one, and I was fighting against two. I guess they pegged me as the most dangerous since I was able to kill two of them without so much as putting up a fight.

“Keuk.”

I could hear Jong Sawon let out a small sigh. He was already at his limit before this. I guess fighting against an opponent with level 3 skill and armor was really pushing it.

At that moment, an arrow flew out. The enemy who was ready to strike at Jong Sawon’s leg stepped back in surprise.

Level 1 arrow? Level 3 armor? In a fight, none of that mattered. No matter what level armor you had on, if you had any exposed skin and was hit by an arrow...that was it.

“Mr. Jong Sawon! We got your back!”

Thanks to Han Joonseok and glasses girl’s aid, helmet guy was able to keep up.

Now how would I handle these two?

# Chapter 46

---

I parried away both of my opponents' swords with one strike from the Honcheon sword.

After a dozen more of these same strikes, the one holding a broadsword yelled out, "Grand Attack!".

Level 3 Skill (Gwangpok) Grand Attack. This skill produced an energy destructive enough to destroy a car.

But all I needed to do was dodge it.

And that was that.

I kicked at the ground and jumped to toward the ceiling. The attack plowed into the ground I had just been previously.

I did feel a bit of pressure against my skin as it passed by, but that was it.

Both of my opponents' eyes travelled up to the ceiling where I was, and they struck at me with their swords.

They were fast.

One of the swords briefly grazed my left arm.

“Keuk.”

I dropped to the ground and checked my arm to assess the damage. It was much more shallow than I had expected.

This was the reward for raising up my defense.

Guy wielding the broadsword stood at my left. And the one standing at my right had a longsword and shield.

I decided to go after broadsword guy first.

I ran to the left.

“Where do you think you’re going!”

Shield guy saw what I was doing and moved to block me.

Shwing.

Behind the shield, the guy with the broadsword poked out his sword to try and stab me.

I grabbed the Honcheon sword with both hands and struck against the broadsword.

Though they were both level 3 swords, the one I held was a named item.

My strength was now over 300%, not including the buff. Using my strength in addition to the explosive damage option, I easily pushed both of them back with one shove.

I felt like my strength was overflowing. Every time I used the Honcheon sword's explosive damage option, it felt like my heart was about to burst.

“Shit! How is he so damn strong!”

“That bastard...he's a monster.”

Both of them finally realized what they were up against. But that didn't mean I would go easy on them at all.

I wielded the Honcheon sword and ran at my opponents.

I could see the fear filling their eyes.

“Spare, spare us...!”

Slam!

As the Honcheon blade slammed into the shield, there was a

small explosion. Just as I evaded one of their blades stabbing at my side, I threw the bloodysword.

Plop – came a sound just as sword lodged into one guy’s forehead.

[+300]

“Huh?!?!”

The remaining guy tossed the shield, turned around, and started to run for his life.

I felt a little bad for him because I was much much faster than him when it came to running.

I picked up the shield.

\*\*\*

“Keuk!”

Helmet guy’s fight ended the moment he cut off the head of the enemy who had an arrow poking out from one eye.

We had gained the Honcheon sword and a no named shield. I now understood why they were trying to steal our items. In order for a regular person to attain a level 3 item, they had to spend



several years hunting while risking their lives. I was able to attain these level 3 items so easily. What should have taken arduous hunting again and again...came into my possession in a matter of a few strokes of my sword.

But we were not finished just yet.

Helmet guy brought the remaining porter and dropped him to his knees.

“Please, please spare me.”

He had a black blindfold on. When I had made up my mind to kill those other guys, what had worn on my heart the most was this fellow right here. But he had to die. We couldn't leave any witnesses.

But would I be able to extinguish the life of someone who couldn't even defend himself?

“If it's too hard for you, I can do it in your stead.”

Helmet guy walked up to me and said. It was an attractive offer.

But I shook my head.

“Wait a minute.”

“Party head. It will be more dangerous if we keep dragging the time.”

Han Joonseok said. He was right. If we didn’t hurry up, the dungeon operator would get suspicious and wander in. The moment the dungeon operator stepped in was the moment we lost all ability to hide the evidence of our deed.

“I just need a quick minute.”

“What on earth...”

“Those people, will you look at them carefully?”

I pointed at the five bodies piled in a heap on the ground. Everyone was avoiding the pile and so did not notice.

“Ah...?”

The dead bodies were starting to evaporate.

Tap.

An item had dropped.

\*\*\*

“How many years have you been working as a porter?”

“I’m sorry? Oh. 10 years.”

“How long have you been a porter for those bastards?”

“It was my first time! After the leisure parties were just reinstated again, this was the first job that I was able to secure. I swear!”

“Please show me your credentials.”

“Over...here..here.”

He passed over his credentials with shaky hands. He was definitely a certified porter. His 10 years’ experience was the truth as well.

“Will you please take out a level 2 equipment from the backpack?”

“Oh...ok! Yes!”

He dug through the backpack and pulled out an arrow.

It was a level 2 arrow, the “Stalker”. It was an arrow with a tracking spell option that had a cooltime as well. Once every

minute, no matter which direction it was shot, it could track and hit its target.

The price was 350,000 dollars. An expensive item.

“You must never reveal what happened here today. Do you understand?”

“Yes. I, I understand.”

He nodded his head so violently it looked like it might just snap off.

“If you add up the cost of all the ores in that backpack, it should be a value of over 20,000 dollars.”

“That, that’s...”

“Keep it.”

“What?”

To a porter, 20,000 dollars was a tremendous amount of money.

I was giving it to him in trade for his silence.

\*\*\*

My first thought was to get rid of all evidence and blame the deaths on the irregular. In order for that to work, I had to get rid of the Honcheon sword and shield. Being in possession of these items would only serve to cause suspicion. Killing the porter would have been necessary too.

But when the bodies disappeared, all my worries evaporated with them.

Not a shred of evidence was left behind and all we had to do was argue that the Honcheon sword and shield were ours.

Soon enough the dungeon operators came in to get us. They did question us a bit regarding going over our time, but we weren't suspected of anything. Since they disappeared in the dungeon without a trace to be found, this would probably end up being an unsolved case.

“But what the hell do you think happened?”

Han Joonseok asked.

“It's probably the same reason the irregulars appear. Something is changing.”

“To think that an item would appear from killing a person..”

Han Joonseok said with disbelief as he stared at the item I was holding in my hand.

It was a run of the mill pair of glasses.

I put it on.

“Hm?”

I could see a green number floating in the air. As I examined each party member, I could see their individual skill level and proficiency above their heads.

“Oh...this is...”

Pretty damn good. In order for someone to be able to see other people's skill level, they had to use up their only skill lot. But this....

Just in case, I closed my left eye. I wondered what would happen if I checked for my stats while I had these glasses on.

As soon as I did this, the numbers in front of my closed eyelid shattered and then began to gather together into a pile in the middle to reform as a sentence.

Would you like to reboot the manual?

“What's wrong?”

I guess I didn't look ok because Han Joonseok asked in a worried tone.

"It's nothing. Would you like to try it on?"

Han Joonseok put on the glasses and nodded his head.

"So you can find out other people's skills with these glasses. How fun."

"Hey. I want to see too."

They passed the glasses around from one person to the other, starting from Cho Youngoo.

There was an atmosphere of wonder coming from everyone.

So, I guess I needed to do what I needed to do.

"We were able to acquire two items from the dungeon this time. An arrow and these glasses. I plan to put them up for auction. Since there are two people here who use a bow, please name the price you are willing to pay."

"Hm...I will buy it for 100,000 dollars."

“Hey. Too cheap. You should at least say 300,000 at the least. If we sell it outside, we can get it for 350,000.”

Cho Youngoo started to grunt..

“That’s all I have. Jerk.”

“I won’t bid. To be honest, I don’t have the money...”

Glasses girl said. I nodded my head and said to the other members.

“There is one person who has bid for the stalker at 100,000 dollars. Is there anyone else who is against this bid?”

If there was anyone who did not accept this price, we would place this item up for sale at the hunter market.

“Well....it doesn’t matter much to me. It’s not like I need the money that bad.”

Jung Sooah said. Helmet guy had no interest in money from the start. Cho Youngoo was definitely not of a mind to keep his friend from getting stronger, and the same was for glasses girl. Manager Kim did grumble a bit but he didn’t say anything.

Everyone felt it.



If they didn't all get stronger, the next time something like this happened, it might be them who evaporated instead.

“Ok good. I will then say my piece. I am against it.”

“Wow. I didn't see you like that kind of person, but you kind of suck.”

Cho Youngoo said with a smirk. Since the ruling was based on majority, my opinion held no water. I just felt like saying it anyway. Why not?

# Chapter 47

---

“With a vote of 5 people for and 1 person against, we have determined that the Stalker will be purchased by Mr. Han Joonseok for the price of 100,000 dollars.”

“Yes!”

Han Joonseok, whose face had been void of emotion until just a moment ago, was all smiles.

Jung Sooah then said.

“But why did you vote against it?”

“Because of the next item we will auction out.”

Jung Sooah looked at me with a puzzled expression.

“The next item ‘Silver Glasses’ will be up for auction.”

Since this wasn’t something even for sale at the hunter market, we didn’t really have an official name for it. There was no one laying claim to it.

I spoke.

“I’ll put out an initial bid of 120,000 dollars.”

“Whew...that’s alot of money.”

Jung Sooah said with wide eyes. Hm. I guess I needed to do some explaining.

“Though it is a common skill for people to find out an opponent’s skill and level, being able to do so without using up a skill slot makes this a great item. I would say that it would be worth purchasing this item even if I were to spend every dime I had.”

“Hm...is that right?”

Jung Sooah held her chin as she went into deep thought.

Even with my explanation, there wasn’t one person who made a higher bid.

“120,000 dollars is a steal, people. If this item were to go up for sale on the market, we would be able to sell it for 300,000 dollars at the very least. Since it is also pretty much one-of-a-kind...it might sell for even more than that.”

I explained it like this but my plan was to keep this for myself. The ‘manual’ that these glasses referred to was bothering me but, most of all, being able to know another person’s skill level would be amazing.

I was pretending that I didn't want it as a reverse psychology tactic.

"I'm against it."

"Me too."

As soon as Jung Sooah said she was against it, glasses girl immediately followed suit.

These girls. Why are you foiling my plan!

"SunbehOppa. You realize your face just turned to stone just now?"

"Shut up."

"Hm...I'll vote against it too."

Han Joonseok said as he nodded his head. Cho Youngoo stared at the three in surprise until Han Joonseok tapped him with his hip. With that, Cho Youngoo responded as if he were doing it reluctantly...

"I...I am against it as well."

“I’m against it too.”

With Manager Kim’s answer, the vote was unanimous.

Ah....this wasn’t what I wanted.

But I couldn’t backpedal now and say that I’ll give them 300,000 so that I can keep this instead of selling it at the market.

“Due to...er...a unanimous decision..it has been determined that...”

“Before we move on to that. These glasses. They were dropped from a dead person. Who would actually buy this?”

Jung Sooah said haughtily.

“The hunter’s market most likely will not buy an item of unknown origin. Further, we can’t know what level this item is nor can anyone be certain it is safe to use.”

“Su...sure. That was my thought too. That this wasn’t something we could sell.”

“It would be a problem even if the market did accept it. If we sell something like this, we could get some serious bad luck. I’m not just saying this. We need to keep it to remind us of what we did.”

Manager Kim said.

It somehow made this whole conversation seem legitimate hearing Manager Kim say those words with such a serious face.

“Then. I’ll hold on to these glasses. Just for now. In the future, if the need arises, we can then decide on whether we reacution the item or sell it at the market.”

“I agree with SunbehOppa’s decision.”

“I too think party head’s decision is the correct one.”

“Honestly I don’t really care...”

Cho Youngoo responded with a yawn.

A laugh tinkled in the air.

I’m not an idiot. It’s not as if I didn’t know what was going on.

Everyone had noticed I wanted this for myself so they were all playing along to help me keep it without it seeming awkward. This is nice.

\*\*\*

I didn't put the Honcheon sword nor the shield up for auction. Reason? Because they weren't dropped items. They were items we had gained from killing people. Though there wasn't a procedure on what should be done in this kind of a situation, we were all in agreement that an auction was not what should happen.

It was also clear that selling it was not an option either. Keeping two good items was a much better value than trading it for money.

The items that I could now make using the Item Fusion book was one bloodysword. Now that I had the blisolnite, I thought it was a good time to try my hand at putting the Item Fusion book to use.

But there was something I had to do first.

“...SunbehOppa...um...”

I covered Sooah, who was asleep and rubbing her face on her pillow, with a blanket. Her shifting shirt kept revealing what I had no business looking at so I needed to cover her up.

It had now become a bad habit of hers to sleep over at my place.

“I should make some bean sprout soup.”

But I couldn't really say anything because again I was the one that had to be piggybacked home after a hard night of drinking with the members. I had low tolerance. I was a drunken mess from just one bottle of soju.

It was a relief that I was a well-behaved drunk at least.

Boil boil.

While the beansprout stew was boiling on the stove, I took out the silver glasses from my backpack. From the look of it, though it did look a bit on the elegant side, it still just looked like regular glasses. And there was no problem wearing it since it didn't have prescription lenses.

I put it on.

“Hm...”

Now my face looked like it belonged more in a library than a dungeon. I didn't really like that.

Because if you look weak, people tend to want to start trouble.

I stared at the sleeping Sooah with the glasses on.

\*\*\*

Skill type: Friendship, can grant self and up to 5 allies 20% increase in ability



Additional ability: Super Friendship, can give just 1 person 50% increase in ability. Cooltime of one day after use.

Proficiency: 16

\*\*\*

Super Friendship. The one person buff's name was that, it seems. To think that it can give information the skill's owner didn't even know. But I didn't put this on to check for this.

I closed my left eye.

-Would you like to reboot the manual?

That same message popped up again.

What am I supposed to do now? There wasn't like a button or any other indicator so that I can say yes or no.

“Yes.”

-User acceptance received. Manual is booting.

A shower of green numbers, english letters, korean words, and a mix of other special characters began to jumble together. It felt like the matrix. Then finally the rain of characters formed a square

box.

It felt like I was staring at an arcane computer interface I might have seen in a museum one time.

-Manual booting complete. Thank you for using delta v0.1. Before starting, please read the tutorial. All menu options are accessible via word prompt.

“Tutorial.”

As soon as I said that word, a whole slew of texts began to appear.

The contents generally looked like what you would find in a manual. What caught my eye was a section on skill types and their relationships.

“Skill Window.”

-The active skill is ‘Effort’. The stats for this skill are as follows.

Strength 200, Endurance 300, Reflexes 150, Focus 150, Defense 150

“Oh...”

I was super impressed. This meant I didn’t have to keep track of

everything anymore. All I had to do was put these glasses on, close my left eye, and reboot or turn on the manual.

There was a [+] button next to each of the abilities.

This was an extremely intuitive interface. This meant that I didn't have to beat myself up in the area I wanted to raise anymore. All I had to do was press that button to invest my reward points...right? So does that mean these glasses are a cheat since I technically wouldn't have to put in the effort of pushing myself to the limit anymore?

“Sunbeh...? The soup is overflowing?”

Sooah said as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes.

“Ah...!”

I ran to the stove and turned it off. Half of it seemed to have evaporated. More flavor, I guess?

# Chapter 48

---

“Thank you for the food.”

“Thank you for the food.”

Since I had to put in more water and boil it again, the taste wasn't as good...but it was fine. While I was doing the dishes, Jung Sooah finished up in the shower and came out saying, “Those glasses look good on you. You look like a professor.”

“...I'll take it as a compliment.”

I took them off and put them into my shirt's front pocket. Even though it looked fragile, I'm sure it wouldn't break easily since it was an item.

“Oh yeah. What does your schedule look today?”

“I thought I would just hang out here all day. I even brought some snacks on the way. Kind of sucks that you don't have a tv though.”

“Aren't you going to go home?”

“...So mean. And you were so friendly last night too.”

I sprayed water at her face.

“Kya!”

“Stop playing around. I remember everything ok? I know that as soon as we got home, we both fell right to sleep.”

“Chet...anyway, why?”

“I thought of going to the market later in the afternoon. If you don’t have any other plans, I was wondering if you might come with me.”

“Surely...this isn’t a sneaky way of asking me out on a date?”

“Just go home.”

“I’ll come back in an hour. I just need to change.”

\*\*\*

After sending her home, I went back to check the manual again. I pretty much got the gist of how to use it. One of its feature was that you could store the user’s skill and item into a virtual space.

To test my theory, I took out the Item Fusion book. A message immediately appeared.

-Would you like to store the Item Fusion book?

I wanted to see if verbal as well as gesture prompts were viable input methods.

I nodded my head this time. As the book disappeared, a text with the title 'Fusion' appeared.

“Fusion.”

As soon as I said this, a list of all the fusion combinations appeared. I chose the bloodysword.

-Due to missing items, we are unable to move forward with the fusion.

“So we can do the fusion this way too.”

I wanted to check on a different item next.

Just for testing purposes, I took out Park Jungbeh's longsword. Instead of nodding, I made a verbal prompt.

“Store.”

As soon as I spoke my verbal input, the longsword disappeared and another text appeared. Then when I tried to grab at the text, as

if by magic, the longsword appeared back in my hand.

This. I could get used to this.

I went ahead and stored every single item I had. When I tried to store the Honcheon sword last, an error message appeared.

-Item storage is full. Please upgrade to store more.

“Upgrade?”

I checked the tutorial again. There was now a new area with upgrade information.

It looked like this manual only gave information on a need to know basis.

-Upgrade is eligible with fulfillment of the correct amount of ores. Upgrade to the next version requires 100 ores in total. Type of ore does not matter.

The cheapest ore is 1,000 dollars. That meant upgrading would cost a minimum of 100,000 dollars.

This meant that all the ores I get from all our hunts would need to be invested into this upgrade. But if I did that, I would be taking away from the party's shares.

I needed to find a different way to compensate them.

This wasn't entirely impossible.

I could just pay them directly from my own pockets.

Luckily I now had the ability to fuse items and earn extra money that way.

\*\*\*

Location: Hunter Market in the Shinchon area. It was just about lunch time so there were quite a few people wandering about.

Jung Sooah came up to me and poke me in the side.

“Did you see?”

“See what?”

“That person leering at me just now.”

“You're imagining it.”

“There have been at least 20 men staring at me with lustful eyes on my way here, ok? Come on. It's about time you admit it, no?”



Jung Sooah said with her arms stretched wide as if she were putting herself on grand display. It wasn't that it wasn't true. She was indeed drawing looks from people. At a height of over 170cm tall, the outfit she had on were actually complimenting her usually broad shoulders. True to her athletic roots, she was well toned everywhere and had really done wonders with makeup today.

“But why are you still wearing those glasses?”

“Why? Is it weird?”

She slipped her arm into mine.

“You want to die?”

“Since you have two, it should be fine loaning one out to me.”

“Is my arm some kind of object?”

“But...”

Squeeze.

“Ok ok fine. I'll let it be so stop squeezing. You're cutting off my circulation.”

“He he.”

What is this manipulation?

The hunter market was only about 10 stories high, but it could probably compete with the biggest of department stores. They probably make about 3,000,000,000 dollars a month but, since this was not including all their online sale, they probably make several times more than that. Plus if you took into account their earnings from outside countries...I can't even imagine that kind of money.

The representative of this goliath was that very Lee Wheesung. You know. The man who found the very first skillbook ever? Not only was he a world renowned hunter, but he was the elite of the elites – a man with power, money, and fame.

Even more amazing – this man did not age. His wife was still as beautiful as ever too. It was probably due to a skillbook, but that has never been confirmed.

“Welcome to Hunter Market.”

We were greeted by female personnel dressed in clean cut suits.

\*\*\*

Name: ???

Skill type: Charm (1), Ability to draw the target's attention

Additional Option: Group Management, Ability to draw attention of a group of people

Proficiency: 79

\*\*\*

“Hm?”

This was what I saw above the head of one personnel. I was slightly surprised. Even though this was a level 1 skill, it was surprising that a regular civilian had a skill.

Male.

Most of the patrons here were male. There were a lot of hunters, but there were also a lot of civilians as well. To cater to this group, there were a lot of replica equipment, accessories, bags, cardigans, and more. They were even selling goods with famous hunters depictions, tactical videos, and books by famous hunters as well.

“This item was once owned by Team Eskatose's tanker, Jang Hyunseung, until just 5 years ago. It is known for its sleek scales which change colors depending on the angle. Due to its artistic value, this item is very sought after.”

You could hear this explanation coming from a female, who looked to be a curator, holding a mic. She was extremely beautiful, but I could see a skill above her head as well. It was a level 1 ‘Ideal Beauty’ skill. Basically, it had the ability to slightly change the skillholder’s face to reflect the viewer’s ideal form of beauty.

That was a super expensive skill. If my memory serves correctly, it had market price of over a million dollars.

When I briefly scanned everyone around me, I could see that almost every employee had a skill in their possession. In the case of the guards, their skills started at at least a level 3. Seeing that there were several hundred guards posted all around the market, they could probably hold back an entire army.

“...It’s a scary place.”

I was able to recognize anew just what an amazing place the hunter market was. If they were able to invest so much into their lower level employees, then just how much was management making?

Click!

“...What are you doing?”

“It’s just a commemorative photo! I’m going to post it on SNS.”

“...”

I shook my head as I headed to my goal destination. The first floor was mostly comprised of shops set up for civilians. The real stuff was sold in the basement level.

When we arrived at basement level 3, we came upon a scene lined with shops as far as the eye could see. Most of the items for sale were level 1s with some level 2 items scattered here and there.

“It’s a lot quieter here.”

“It used to be packed back in the day.”

It seemed that sales were slow for level 1 and level 2 weapons ever since all the level 1 dungeons had disappeared. And among the few who were here, it looked like their objective was to sell rather than to buy.

The two daggers I needed to use in fusing for a bloodysword were priced at 50,000 and 55,000 dollars each. For something that had once sold for about 130,000, I had expected to pay at least 60,000 per. It looked like times were dire.

After making my purchases, we headed on over to a cafe on the ground floor. There were some people here too, but we were able to snag a booth.

Once we sat in our booth, I took out the two daggers I had purchased for 105,000 dollars. One was a glossy red color while the

other was a plain silver-white.

I then took the ores out from my bag and immediately tried my hand at the fusion.

“Bloodysword. Fuse.”

As soon as I made the command, the two weapons and three ores began to meld into one right before my eyes.

It didn't even take 10 seconds in all. Jung Sooah, who had been watching silently the entire time, blinked a few times before saying,

“Holy cow. So it really works?”

The only reason the process had been so smooth and easy was due to the manual.

“Are we done with everything now?”

“Well, all that's left is to sell this.”

“Then that means starting now...the two of us are...”

“Party head.”

I looked up to see Cho Youngoo and Han Jooseok waving at us at the cafe entrance.

Jung Sooah looked at me with a mix of annoyance and surprise.

“SunbehOppa!”

“Ah. I called them. There were things we needed to talk about. The rest of the crew will be here too.”

“...Can I cry a bit right now?”

# Chapter 49

---

“I get the feeling we’re interrupting something...”

Han Joonseok said with an awkward face as he sat next to Jung Sooah.

Soon after, Manager Kim and glasses girl arrived together. Then finally, helmet guy came too. Dressed in a suit, he seemed to be drawing glances from people. You couldn’t really say that he was conventionally handsome. But his good physique and large scar across his face made him look impressive and manly.

As soon as everyone arrived and settled down, I got straight to the point.

“The reason for my asking everyone to come out here today is to discuss our next raid.”

“Can’t you just plan everything like you’ve been doing so far? To be honest, you are the most experienced and informed out of all of us.”

Manager Kim said. He was right. I had loads of info up in my head, and I knew just how I needed to use it. And I also knew if I continued to push forward as the lead, no one would have a problem with that.

“What I wanted to discuss today was more on how we should



balance out the party.”

“So that was it.”

Han Joonseok responded. He was a sharp one.

“What does that mean?”

At Cho Youngoo’s question, Han Joonseok responded,

“He’s saying that nobody else is able to keep up with his ability. We’re basically just holding on to his ankles every raid.”

“Then...then...”

Cho Youngoo looked in my direction with wavering eyes. If I were to thin out the herd, the first to be chopped are Cho Youngoo and glasses girl. Everyone knew this. They were both still level 1s.

Gulp.

But I didn’t want to just chop them here and now. We had shared some difficult battles together. There were plenty of strong people in the world, but there weren’t too many people you could trust. If they were willing to stick with me, I had every intention of helping to bring out their strengths so that they can grow and keep up.

This wasn't an entirely unselfish act on my part. If I could keep fusing items like this and arming my party members with said items...that would allow them to stay while also strengthening the entire team.

Human resources are the biggest asset.

What you cannot do yourself is made all the easier with help from others.

"I have made my decision. First Mr. Cho Youngoo."

"Yes! Party head!"

He yelled out.

"...You don't have to answer so loudly. What I wanted to discuss was the level 3 no name shield that we obtained recently."

"You're not saying you'll loan it to me?"

I nodded my head.

"A level 3 no name shield is currently priced at 500,000 dollars. I was thinking of loaning it to you for 5,000 dollars per use. What do you think..."

“That sounds fine.”

“This is not something for you to decide so quickly. Borrowing it for 5,000 dollars could result in a loss for you.”

“I decided to be a hunter because I wanted to be a hunter..not so that I can earn a lot of money. If I can just join you on raids, then I do not see how I can possibly call it a loss no matter the outcome.”

“...understood.”

This was a shield I had no use for anyway. You could say this was a mutually beneficial agreement.

I looked at glasses girl next. She was pretty much an extra. And in reality, rarely gave the team any true value.

“And for glasses girl...”

“I’m sorry. I...need money.”

I could see her wringing the hands she had atop her lap. She was carrying the financial burden of an entire family on her shoulders. I held the future of all those people in my hands.

“Then please tell us what value you bring to this party. If you cannot convince everyone here, I cannot justify keeping you on board.”

“I’ll work hard. I’ll do my very best.”

“That’s not enough.”

“But the only thing I can do is my best. I can only put in my best effort.”

“No. I believe that you have a talent.”

“I’m sorry?”

I planned on keeping glasses girl. And I did have good reason for it. At least a good enough reason to convince everyone else to keep her on the team.

I looked to everyone and said,

“Yeonkyoung has a tremendous skill when it comes to archery.”

“Tremendous...skill?”

Everyone looked stumped.

Her skill was in her rapid fire shooting abilities.

If she could just raise the level of her bow and skill, then her accuracy and destructive power will undoubtedly rise as well. But there was no item or skill that could make a person a faster shot. This was because being able to reload a bow and shoot quickly could only be earned through hard work and training.

You can be a bad shot. That can be aided by the right skill. It's fine if you are lacking in attack power. The right weapon will do that for you. But rapid fire loading is not something that can be improved by way of a skill or equipment. You can only load a bow quickly and accurately enough to shoot with practice."

"But I don't have the money to..."

"I will loan you equipment at a price you can afford. But on one condition."

"What condition...?"

"An exclusive contract."

"Exclusive contract?"

"Yeh. That means you cannot hunt with any other party. And if we set a date for a raid, you will be obligated to drop all other engagements."

"...Is that it?"

“This is an investment I am making for what I expect from you in the future.”

“..Thank you.”

“SunbehOppa. Thanks.”

Jung Sooah was wiping away tears.

Ah. This is why you can't take girls anywhere...

Sniff.

Cho Youngoo seemed to be tearing up too.

Guess we had one more girl.

“Oh, and Mr. Han Joonseok.”

“I'm fine.”

“...thank you.”

He had invested 100,000 dollars to purchase the stalker arrow. I was prepared for him to feel a certain way from my giving such a

generous deal to a party member who was also an archer. I was thankful to him for saying those two words.

We went over the issue with the ores quickly enough. We decided that I would just pay them extra via the contribution split instead of going through the process of selling the ores and then doing the split. After we finished discussion all of this, I felt more at peace.

It felt like I had pushed off a heavy rock that had been resting on my chest.

Jung Sooah spoke.

“SunbehOppa, you’re a good person.”

“Don’t try to butter me up for anything. I don’t have money.”

“Oh I’ll butter you up.”

PFTTT!

Cho Youngoo spit out the coffee he had been drinking.

\*\*\*

We decided to choose a different dungeon for the next raid. This was because there was a high chance the same irregular that

appeared before would appear again. Something we learned from our experience with the cave wolf.

So we settled on the Baeksapyoung dungeon. It was a dungeon we were familiar with, and I also wanted to give helmet guy an opportunity to fight with his irregular. I made this decision based on my assessment that our team now possessed enough ability to be able to take care of the level 4 monster.

But, as usual, a problem arose.

Though we had arrived right on time, we were told that our entrance was denied.

“Why is that?”

“The party before you has not yet come out. It seems they may have run into a problem.”

“By problem you mean...?”

Though the thought of an irregular came to mind, there was also a strong enough correlation that no matter how fast a party cleared a dungeon...an irregular usually did not appear if I was not in the team.

This was what has happened up to now, so I was fairly confident this was how it would continue. It was probably some other reason.



The most common monster to appear at the Baeksapyoung dungeon was the lizardman. Then the armored anteater. But since their fighting styles, strengths, and weaknesses were all known factors..they weren't too hard to fight.

“We don't know anything as of yet. Our dungeon operating team has gone inside to investigate.”

“Didn't it already pass 10 minutes? It feels like they're a little late in coming back.”

Jung Sooah said.

“What the heck have you been doing this whole time? This dungeon is a flat sand terrain so it is pretty expansive. Just looking for the target party would probably take 30 minutes minimum.”

“Then we shouldn't be standing around like this. Every available body should go in to find them.”

“But we don't know exactly what happened inside. If we incur more victims...”

A dungeon operator spoke.

More victims?

I asked.

“Is there something you know that you’re not sharing?”

“That is...do you know about team Ezekiel?”

# Chapter 50

---

Team Ezekiel was the name of a group of hunters who have been clearing dungeons extremely quickly as of late. Their initial tactics were moving in small groups but very recently, like the mercenary team, they had formed a larger group with a lot of level 1 hunters to quickly clear dungeons.

The problem with this was, that there would be a high mortality rate among the level 1 hunters. Which was expected, since they were performing high pressure raids.

“From the words of the survivors, we hear it isn’t intentional, but the mortality rates were just so high that we needed to start an investigation.”

“What is your definition of high mortality rates?”

“The death percentage is about 10%”

“What the hell...!”

“That’s basically a suicide mission...not a hunt.”

Every one of my party members was muttering with shock and awe. But not in the good way. General parties usually had a mortality rate of 2-3%...and that was considered high. Compared to that though, 10% was just too much. If 1 out of 10 hunters died on every hunt, who in their right mind would even go?

The problem was that the current situation was making people take on that kind of risk. Because hunters with only level 1 equipment would be unable to join a hunt otherwise. I mean, the equipment that used to sell for 100,000 is now only selling for 50,000...and who knew when that would drop to 30,000. Times were tough.

Unlike the mercenary team where the party head organized all the attacks to promote the safest approach, the Ezekiel team were known to recklessly hunt with abandon for the sake of faster clearing times...and the level 1 hunters with no choice but to try and keep up.

“So do you believe that even now they are probably fighting recklessly against a monster and are behind held back because of that?”

“That is what we think, yes.”

Slam!

In that instant, a person came out of the dungeon. The man who looked to be a dungeon operator, took one step and immediately collapsed to the ground. He was covered in blood.

“Medic!”

Doctors rushed to the scene and started to perform healing.

Luckily they were on standby...otherwise it might have meant one more body count.

“What the hell happened? What is going on in there!”

The dungeon operator was yelling at the injured worker on the ground. As he began to heal a bit, he answered with a burdened voice,

“Keuk...the monsters were running around all over the dungeon instead of being isolated in their usual locations.”

The questioning operator’s face became like stone.

Monsters usually remain in a designated area. But this is if you don’t provoke them. I thought back on the cave wolf boss. If you did provoke a monster though, they were insistent beasts. They won’t stop.

“So they started something they couldn’t keep a lid on.”

The dungeon operator let out a sigh. I could guess at what probably happened. The hunting time had been halved since a few days ago. The Ezekiel team, who usually hunted with reckless speed to start with, probably messed with all the monsters at once to try and speed up the hunt even more. And this most likely ended biting them in the ass.

There was a high chance that over half the team was dead by

now.

“When are the senior hunters due to arrive?”

I asked.

“We were told that there is no one in the neighborhood. It will be a minimum of an hour. Since we are in a secluded area...it can't be helped.”

“Then a lot more people will probably die in that time.”

“It's out of our hands. In this kind of situation...”

“What would you say to us going in?”

“Impossible. It will be too dangerous. You will not know when and where a monster could pop out and attack.”

“But it's better than just sitting around and doing nothing while people are dying.”

“Hm...that is true but...”

The dungeon operator seemed to be lost in thought. As a civil servant, he was probably conflicted between whether he should do the legally sound thing or the humane thing. People who died

inside the dungeon were not his responsibility. But if we went inside even though he knew it was dangerous and we got hurt...he could very well be held responsible.

“Hoo...Ok.”

It seemed he decided to trust his heart. He nodded his head to allow us in.

The inside of the dungeon was very quiet. From what the injured operator had told us, since the monsters would not be where they should, we had to constantly stay on alert.

“Can I asked why you insisted on doing this?”

Han Joonseok questioned me. I answered.

“No admission fees...and we can hunt with no time limit.”

“Ah...”

“Uh? Then we’re not here to try and save people’s lives?”

“How are we supposed to find these people? Seeing as how we haven’t even run into one person yet, they’re either hiding as if their lives depended on it...or they’re all dead.”

“That is true.”

Jung Sooah nodded in all seriousness as if my words were so very wise.

“If I really wanted to rescue people, then all we have to do is kill all the monsters in here. Then the people still alive will be safe to leave. Now. Everyone please get ready to fight.”

As soon as I made a grabbing gesture toward the Honcheon sword in my item list, I was able to grasp the dirt colored sword. I then summoned my armor right before retrieving the no name level 3 shield for Cho Youngoo.

“Please remember to return this upon leaving the dungeon.”

“Of course.”

“Cho Youngoo lightly punched the shield.

The first monsters we faced were lizardmen. They could usually be found in groups of 3-4. Now, I don't know what those idiots did, but we were now facing 9 of these bastards at once. Manager Kim cast his sleep spell and immediately put 2 to sleep. That meant 7 more to go. He did his part. I made a thumbs up sign to the man before I rushed into the crowd of monsters.

Jong Sawon and Cho Youngoo remained close behind me.



Let's start with this one.

Slam!

[+200]

Immediately after, two of the fallen monster's comrades swung their harpoons in vengeance. I pushed out with my sword to parry both weapons right before I kicked hard at their exposed bodies.

Both monsters scurried in retreat. But Cho Youngoo was waiting on the right and Jong Sawon was waiting on their left.

We were able to corral six of these guys together into a small enough group where they were now bumping into one another. I raised my hand.

An arrow flew out to lodge into one lizardman's eye. This was the stalker at work. Even from over 20 meters away, it was able to hit a moving target. A few more arrows shot out after that but they were unable to cause any further damage.

Cornered on three sides, the only place these lizards could move was back. But instead of running away, they struck their harpoons out towards Jong Sawon – who had the weakest defense. Out of the 6, 3 had run towards Jong Sawon, one towards Cho Youngoo, and two in my direction.

These monsters weren't total idiots. It looked like they did use

their heads a bit.

It was too bad that was the extent of their genius.

I threw the bloodysword. The sword flew in the air and lodged itself into the thigh of one lizardman that had been running at Jong Sawon. I was aiming for its neck...so my aim was very off. But whatever. I got it.

Shwing!

A harpoon swiped at my chest.

To me, they were just moving way too slow. I batted away the next swipe with my hand and shoved my Honcheon sword right into the monster. The perfect attack. There was no need for me to even activate the explosive damage option.

Blood began to dribble out of its mouth.

[+200]

Slam!

[+200]

After easily disposing of my two monsters, I headed over to Jong Sawon to help him.

The battle ended without any real change in the momentum we started out with. It had taken us about 3 minutes to take care of all the lizardmen. Reward points for this battle = 1400. Of the two remaining lizardmen still asleep, I slit the throat of one while I used the stalker to kill the other. This was so that I could put it in my Item Fusion book.

As we waited for the monsters to evaporate, I checked my book to see what was required to make the stalker.

A level 1 tracking arrow and a level 1 eagle's eye. The eagle's eye came in the form of a monocle and helped to boost the wearer's accuracy in archery by 10%. This type of accessory is still in high demand and probably sells for 100,000 dollars.

I pulled up the manual to check my stats.

Skill type: Effort (o). Skill has the ability to use reward points to increase physical abilities.

Extra skill/option: None

Proficiency: 19

Reward Points: 2330

Abilities: Strength 200, Endurance 300, Reflexes 150, Focus 150,

Since the reward points would keep rolling in, there was no point in saving them.

What should I raise next?

After a brief moment of thought, I pointed at Reflexes.

I figured this would probably be the most helpful in our immediate battles. Right?

# Chapter 51

---

Tap.

Right when I was trying to raise my Reflex ability, an item dropped from one of the monsters.

“Holy cow! An item from the start!”

Jung Sooah scooped up the item. It was a cane. A level 2 amplification cane to be more exact. This item helped to increase the user’s chances of successfully casting a spell. It was perfect for manager Kim.

“Oh. Isn’t that mine?”

“You can use it for now. But we’ll be putting it up for auction as soon as we leave the dungeon.”

“I’ll still be buying it so..”

“If you name a cheap price, I’ll vote against it. You have a lot of money right? Didn’t you say that when you got fired, they paid you a healthy amount as severance?”

Jung Sooah trumpeted out loud.

“Kkeung. That’s my retirement fund.”

“But why’d you get fired?”

Cho Youngoo asked.

“Little rotten bastards. I made a small mistake and the director tried to demote me and send me off to some rural place.”

“So you got mad and quit?”

“Quit my butt. I went to the director and gave him piece of my mind.”

“What’d you say?”

“To please over look it that one time...but he didn’t listen. And then bam!”

“You hit him?”

“No. He hit me. He’s a hunter too, you see. I used to follow him whenever he went on a raid...bastard.”

“Wow. So you just let him hit you?”

“What else could I do? If I got fired, there was nowhere else for me to go. But then that bastard said this.”

Manager Kim let out a deep sigh.

“If you resign now I’ll give you a good amount of severance pay.”

“So you said yes?”

“A circumstance warranted it. One of the employees I managed went over to the competition, you see. But it was my fault for not spotting it sooner.

“Hm...so that employee was giving the competition company intel.”

“Well I later found out that it was all masterminded by the director. When he thought that he was going to get caught, he just used me as the scapegoat.”

Manager Kim was shaking with anger at this point. From how angry he was, we could tell he wasn’t lying. But you never know what a person is really thinking so I’ll chalk it up to believing half of it. It could also have been that the both were in cahoots and Manager Kim was the only one who got caught. Who knows.

In that time, the monsters finished evaporating. A total of 6 ores dropped – one of them a blisolnite. I stored the other 5 ores into the manual. They were automatically being applied toward the upgrade tab.

I explained this feature as a kind of invisible backpack to everyone. Since there were items that served similar functions, no one thought it suspicious.

But I did sense they were a bit envious.

“Shall we continue?”

The next point was about a 10 minute walk. We were planning to fight if a monster appeared and to move on if one didn't.

This method would be the best in trying to find survivors as well.

We continued in this manner for several points.

“It's very quiet, isn't it?”

Han Joonseok whispered. Somehow the silence made it seem like whispering was mandatory.

There wasn't a monster in sight.

Were those 9 monsters it?

I motioned everyone to stop.

We were standing exactly where a monster should appear. The



ground was covered in weeds that came up to your ankles. When I looked down and examined closer, I couldn't find what should have been there.

Footsteps, blood, any other hint that someone or something had been here.

“There has never been a fight in this location.”

“Maybe they lured the monsters away? Maybe they ran and were caught by the monsters somewhere else? It could be any number of reasons.”

Han Joonseok responded. That was true.

1. They might have lured the monsters inadvertently while running away
2. They purposely lured the monsters away
3. They killed the monsters using a spell where the fight might have lasted a minute
4. Or they never stepped foot here

1 was highly unlikely. If they had been running away, there would have been some caught and killed..which we should have seen evidence of on our way here. But not a drop.

Number 2 was the most likely possibility. And number 3 & 4 were highly improbable.

I tried to look for an area where they might have purposely lured monsters to hunt. There were too many.

But the most likely place was an area about 50 meters off north of the hill. If I were the hunter, I would have chosen that spot.

\*\*\*

“Is it here? The spot you were talking about?”

“Yeh. But no sign of anyone here either.”

“It’s going to be hard looking for them this way. What do you think about going to the last point and working backwards from there?”

“Ok. Let’s do that.”

I nodded my head.

\*\*\*

There were a total of 10 monster points at the Baeksapyoung dungeon. Compared to other dungeons, this dungeon was far larger – which resulted in more distance between each point. For this reason, if you wanted to clear the entire dungeon in less than two hours, you had to employ some unconventional methods.

And we were able to discover that method at the last point.

“What...what is this...”

There were dozens of bodies lying around. No monsters though. But seeing as there were dropped items here and there, it was clear that a battle had taken place here.

Altogether, there were 32 corpses.

All but 8 had died here on this spot.

“It looks as if they had lured all the monsters to this spot. Those 9 we encountered were just monsters that slipped through the cracks.”

Han Joonseok surmised.

There were 3 points of entry – each wide enough to allow just three people to pass through at once.

On examining where the bodies lay, it looks like there were about 10 hunters appointed at each of the entrances.

This was thought out.

It was definitely a waste of time for 40 hunters to go as a group from point to point to kill monsters. But it was also dangerous to split the group into 2 or 3 teams to cover more than one point at

once.

This was because every point had a different number of monsters. You could get lucky and run into a small number...or you could get unlucky and run into far too many. There wasn't a way to predict which points would have how many monsters and split the team in that way.

That's when they probably came up with this.

Instead of dividing up the team, they needed to call the monsters to them. Because the last point had three entrances, they probably used two of the entrypoints to lure the monsters and divide the team according to how many monsters came through via either point. The last entry point was probably left as an escape route.

“Crazy bastards.”

I couldn't keep myself from cursing.

This was not a plan. In theory, it was a perfect. If the monsters moved in the way you wanted, this would have been the best way to hunt.

But, just because they called out to monsters from 3 points didn't mean those would be the only monsters to appear. What would happen if monsters from other points decide to join the fray? The 9 lizardmen we had met probably formed a group in this very same manner.

Then I realized one thing.

If they had fallen into that kind of misfortune, there was no way that anyone would have made it alive. If in the small chance they did, they would have either made it out or we would have bumped into them on the way here.

But neither of the two happened.

Then where are the remaining 8?

That was when I heard a monster's screech from the left entrypoint. An armored anteater popped up from beneath the ground.

KEEEEEEE!

Another one appeared to the right. This was a predatory toad. It seemed the two were waiting at either sides...waiting for prey to appear.

The predatory toad swallows whole live humans and digests them slowly. If you are swallowed, it is said that you suffer for 30 minutes to an hour being digested.

“Ah.”

That's when I realized.

There weren't any survivors. The reason why the dungeon hadn't reset even without any survivors was because of one reason.

Within the predatory toad's stomach...there was still a living person...slowly being digested.

# Chapter 52

---

Thud. Thud Thud.

The monsters stomped on the floor as they drew nearer.

11 armored anteaters. 8 predatory toads.

The anteaters wore a sturdy armor that enveloped their entire body. Their weaknesses were two: their exposed snout and their simple attack pattern.

The predatory toads use their 3 meter long tongue to grab ahold of their prey. They bind their prey in a stronghold as they release a paralyzing poison. Once you're caught, it was game over.

But they were all full at the moment. They were probably still digesting their previous prey, so there was a low chance they would attack right now.

“Prepare for battle.”

I said as I drew my Honcheon sword. Manager Kim pulled out his cane and raised it above him.

A bright golden like enveloped all the monsters.

Three of them collapsed on the spot.

It wasn't too shabby, but there were too many so it didn't seem as impressive as it would have otherwise. Manager Kim started grumbling.

“This isn't that great, is it?”

“So, you're not going to buy it then? Then I'll have it.”

“Who said that?”

We all got into formation.

Cho Youngoo stood in the middle, I stood on the right, and Jong Sawon on the left. Han Joonseok and glasses girl stood behind us.

This was the best battle formation for this situation.

“Be extra careful of their tongues. Both monsters' tongues have a reach of over 3 meters. The toads' tongues secrete poison so, if you are caught, make sure to stab it with this.

I removed some automatic syringes from my bag and distributed them.

Hitting it hard into the butt caused the needle to pop out and inject the receiver with a dose of antidote.



Since this dungeon was known to have the predatory toads, I had packed these ahead of time.

Not including the three sleeping ones, the rest of the sixteen monsters slowly padded ever closer. And just when they were within the 3 meter distance, they began to attack.

16 tongues struck out seemingly in unison. The predatory toads' tongues were large and heavy looking while the armored anteaters' tongues were more narrow and quicker.

It sucked but in order for the Honcheon sword's explosive damage to work, I had to swing it with a certain amount of force. It didn't do to just cut the opponent. So it was hard to hit it with much force against a tongue that was constantly flicking back and forth.

But it was still a level 3 sword.

I just needed to slice the tongue off.

As I sliced off the thick tongue right when it flicked toward and then away from me, venom mixed with the toad's saliva spurted out.

Even though it wasn't an acidic poison, you still risked the possibility of losing your sight if it got into the eye. Even if you wore glasses, unless they were goggles, they couldn't keep your

eyes completely safe.

I stepped back reflexively each time I cut a tongue to protect myself from the spurt.

Opposite of me, Jong Sawon was cutting their tongues without a seconds' hesitation. His helmet and body armor served as perfect protection from the poison.

And the rubicon sword was able to cut through the tongues like butter. Easy.

It was just that sharp.

Two arrows flew into the wide open mouth of one toad.

One lodged into the uvula and the other into the tongue.

The toad shot with the arrows started to cough as it swung its head around.

I sliced off its tongue.

With that, seven had lost their tongues to us.

And all sixteen of them scooted a few steps back in caution.

It seems they finally realized that just attacking with their tongues would not work against our defenses.

The armored anteaters moved to the middle.

It looked like they were getting ready to fight for real now.

“They’re coming. Mr. Cho Youngoo, to the center!”

“Got it!”

Cho Youngoo and I switched positions.

We needed the level 3 shield now.

Stomp. Stomp.

The armored anteaters lightly ran closer.

Keeping that speed, as they bowed their head toward their belly, they rolled up into a ball. It seemed this was in order to protect their weak point – their snouts.

Though this attack made it hard for them to change directions, it also made it very difficult for us to give any damage.

If we only had level 2 equipment, that is.

Cho Youngoo slammed the rolling anteater with his shield. An armored anteater generally weighed about 400 kilos – about the weight of a small car. And the impact was similar. It would normally be impossible for a human being to withstand that kind of impact and still stand his ground.

But Cho Youngoo was doing it.

One by one, the armored anteaters continued that same attack and Cho Youngoo continued repelling them one by one.

This was the strength of a level 3 shield. It was able to absorb the shock of tremendous impact and send it right back.

Seeing the futility of this attack, some of the other anteaters changed strategy to attack in Jong Sawon and my direction.

And at the same time, six toads from behind also started to jump toward us.

“To the left!”

“Yes!”

Cho Youngoo moved positions to where Jong Sawon was.

More sounds of rolling. But honestly what the hell will that do?

We got this.

I mean, the hard shell was nice and all...but nothing against my honcheon sword.

Shwing!

[+200]

Bam!

[+200]

Slam!

[+200]

Everytime I swung down with my sword and employed the explosive damage option, the hard armored shells burst. Having killed three of them in mere moments, I smirked and dashed forward.

The anteaters that were being held back by Cho Youngoo's shield were all being cut down limb from limb by Jong Sawon's own rubicon sword.

In defiance, the toads began spitting out their poisonous tongues.

Too bad only four of the six toads had their tongues in tact. I spun my body around then used my strength and reflexes to avoid every single nasty tongue to jump into the middle of the crowd of the bastards.

Slurp!

I saw the tongue coming and shifted a bit. It ended up just barely missing me and sticking onto the body of another toad. That toad seemed to shudder for a few seconds before going entirely still.

Looks like they weren't immune to their own paralysis poison. How idiotic. I almost felt like laughing.

“Croak! Croak!”

The remaining toads began to croak in a frenzy as they desperately tried to get me with their tongues. They only made it worse until almost all of them had paralyzed each other. Easy kills.

The last remaining toad that was not paralyzed was struck in the forehead by Han Joonseok's arrow just perfectly.

Then right before the sleeping spell could release the remaining monsters, Jong Sawon slit all their throats one by one.

Only after we made sure they had all died did we begin to cut open their stomachs one by one.

Jung Sooah, who had been sneaking peeks from behind began to make gagging noises.

That girl.

We were only able to save two people.

Their skin, partially melted from the digestive juices of the toads, was hard to look at.

But since they were alive, I'm sure they would be able to somehow recuperate. Hopefully they had some good insurance.

I pulled out the escape scrolls from my bag. From the total five I had started out with, I had just four remaining.

I shoved one each into the survivors' hands and had them rip them up.

Only after I had sent out the survivors from the dungeon did I sigh and collapse to the ground.

Jung Sooah came up to me and wiped off my sweat soaked brow.

“You did well.”

“Thanks.”

I had earned a total reward points of 2,200 this raid. In total, I now had 4,530 points. Not bad.

As we waited for the monsters to evaporate, all was silent. No one said a word.

Because there were 38 corpses strewn all around us. 32 who had died during battle and 6 we had extracted from the toads' stomachs.

I got up from where I was sitting and started to move all the bodies into one area.

Then my party members also got up and followed suit. Even Jung Sooah and glasses girl helped.

12 ores.

38 people had died for 12 ores.

We thought that was the end of it. Until.

Jung Sooah pointed to where the corpses lay.

They had begun to evaporate.



“This is already the second time this has happened. What the hell?”

Manager Kim said.

We had seen dead humans evaporate once before.

The only difference from that time was that I hadn't been the one to kill them. But if you really thought about it, even the one that Jong Sawon had killed that time evaporated too...so I guess it didn't just apply to me.

“Maybe it's like the irregulars. Whenever I'm a part of the equation, whether directly or indirectly, this kind of out of the normal thing happens.”

I didn't have to say this for everyone to realize that there was something about me.

First the level 0 skillbook, then the irregulars. All of them had one thing in common. Me. Though it wasn't easy, I was able to use both to my advantage and become stronger.

“So it's a different system...interesting.”

Han Joonseok began to nod and said,

“Then does that mean there are two raid systems?...”

Cho Youngoo said as if he couldn't believe it,

“But 50 years had passed since monsters first appeared. How is it that all of this is only happening now...?”

“Who says it's only happening now?”

Said Han Joonseok slowly.

“What do you mean?”

“Party head, didn't you say that the day you came upon the level 0 skillbook was the day that irregulars appeared all over the world?”

“Yes. That's true.”

“The irregulars appearing all over the world...it wasn't the first time it's happened before was it?”

“Well. No. It's happened a few times...though it didn't happen on a predictable timetable.”

I had been curious about that so I'd done a search on it a few times.

In the past 50 years, a worldwide occurrence of irregular appearances had occurred and many people had died each time. But since it wasn't something that happened often, people pretty much forgot about it after some years passed.

“What if this same thing happened every time those irregulars appeared?”

“That makes no sense. Then why isn't there any documentation of it? If I wasn't the only one to get my hands on a level 0 skillbook, wouldn't other people know about it?”

“It might be that only a select few like you had gotten a level 0 skillbook. And maybe, like you, they tried to sell it with no success...only to put it somewhere and forget about it.”

“I guess....”

But it could also be that no one besides me had gotten the book. This was a skillbook I earned from killing a level 4 monster.

This meant that there was a very high chance that anyone else who might have gotten their hands on a level 0 skillbook was someone who was over a level 4 in skill or equipment. Why would that kind of person be interested in a level 0 skillbook? This was all starting to make sense.

“But there is still one thing that we can't explain.”

# Chapter 53

---

“What is that?”

“Whether this is it ...or if it’s just the beginning. Maybe this is an evolution of the dungeon.”

Lee Wheeseung came to mind all of a sudden. When he came on the scene, the dungeon raids had evolved for the first time.

He had changed the raid system when he came upon the first skillbook. And he greatly profited from it.

A selfish part of me thought, ‘What if I become like him?’

As the 38 corpses evaporated, items began to drop. It seemed the dropped items were based on the level of the dead people.

Interesting.

“Wow, what is this? It’s an escape scroll! Like the one you just pulled out earlier!”

“There’s some equipment drops here too. Not sure what kind they are though.”

I looked at the item Han Joonseok handed to me. It was a glove. I looked it up in my manual.

\*\*\*

[Selfish Hunter's Glove(1)]

Option: Increase item drop probability by 10%

\*\*\*

This only affirmed my conviction of a new system. This was a never before seen item. Again. And this was also a never before heard of option.

But there were more items that were of equally amazing quality.

Escape (0) 10 sheets: Takes the user directly outside the dungeon

Selfish hunter's glove (1): Increase item drop probability by 10%

Strider's Red Boots (1): Increase speed by 30%

Optical Ruby Ring (1): Enhance vision by 30%. Night vision enabled

Chongmal Garter Belt (1): Enhance muscle strength by 30%. Increases jump skill

Skill, Enchant (1): Adds attack property to a weapon. 10 Minute cooltime

On top of that, we came up on 4 monazites, 5 bastnazitees, 2 blisolnites, and 1 ansilite.

“....holy shit.”

“Are they any good?”

Jung Sooah asked. Since they were all items I could only check with my manual, no one besides me knew their worth.

“Definitely. They’re all level 1 items but almost all of them seem to increase your ability or skill so we could use them. Man....”

“Wow. How much do you think they’ll be if we sold them?”

“We have to think about that.”

“Why?”

“Since they’re all new things and haven’t been inspected thoroughly, we wouldn’t be able to sell them for much. If that’s the case, it’s better for us to just use it ourselves instead of selling it.”

“Then how are we going to distribute them?”

That was the issue at hand. All the items probably had varying levels of usefulness. But because they were all new, we didn’t have a market value to go by.

“For now, everyone just take whatever they want.”

“Are you sure? We don’t mind if you did it through contribution distribution.”

Han Joonseok said as he looked to me. Manager Kim nodded his head in agreement.

“It’s fine. Let’s chalk it up to me taking these glasses and all of you taking something too.”

I tapped my glasses. The manual was something you couldn’t buy with all the money in the world. Since I had taken this, it was only fair they take something too.

“I’ll also take the ores. In trade for the items, there won’t be any payouts this raid. Is that ok with everyone?”

“I have no issues with that.”

“Me neither.”

“I’m good too.”

“Same here.”

“Yep me too.”

“I’m just fine with this.”

Jong Sawon said as he tapped his rubicon sword.

“Ok. Then everyone aside from Mr. Jong Sawon, please choose one item for keeps. If there is something that more than one person would like to have, I will choose which person said item will best suit.”

Everyone started to pick an item one by one.

“I want this one. I won’t really have to do anything but can still contribute to the team.”

Jung Sooah chose the glove. Well, I did have to agree. Since she was the last person we would expect to ever help in an actual fight, that item suited her the most.

Cho Youngoo chose the red boots, Han Joonseok chose the ruby ring, and glasses girl chose the skill.



Manager Kim picked up the remaining garter belt item and wrinkled his face.

“So you’re telling me to pick this...?”

“Garter belts originated for use by men. And because it serves as a support, it duals to assist your lower body.”

“Then you wear it.”

I guess that won’t work, huh? I looked to Jung Sooah and said,

“Why don’t you change with him?”

“You...you’re asking me to wear that?”

“That has a power buff so it suits a porter.”

“I guesss but...”

She snuck a look at the garter belt that manager Kim was holding up. Was she embarrassed to put on a black lace garter belt?

Designwise...it was a problem. Who in their right mind would wear something like that without a problem?

“Ms. Jung Sooah.”

“Yes?”

“One moment...”

Han Joonseok strode up to her to whisper something into her ear. She nodded her head in a serious fashion and said to me.

“I’ll wear it.”

“Good. That’s good. What were you guys talking about just now?”

“SunbehOppa, that’s none of your business.”

Jung Sooah handed the glove over to Manager Kim and took the garter belt.

“Now, there is one last thing.”

“Huh? There’s more?”

“The thing that manager Kim is hiding behind his back.”

“...I guess I got caught.”

Manager Kim made a silly smile and brought out the cane.

“How much will you buy it for?”

I cut right to the chase since there wasn't anyone besides Manager Kim who would buy it. Seeing his face, I slowly raised 1 finger.

100,000? Since Han Joonseok bought the stalker at 100,000 dollars, he might make that his first offer.

“1 thousand...?”

“Ok let's put it up on the market. Everyone in agreement?”

“Yes!”

Everyone nodded their heads. Manager Kim hurriedly countered with 150,000 dollars and I accepted.

When I started to do the contribution split, Jong Sawon refused his share.

Ultimately, we agreed that if a good item came up, he would get first pick.

Since I could still use the item and get it into my item fusion book

before giving it to him, it was not a bad deal for me either.

There was a tax incurred when we put up our items for auction. Then there's also global income tax later on. These government guys. As if they do anything for us.

At this rate, I was a little afraid of just how much taxes I would have to pay next year. But that was a problem for later.

After this and that, like selling the fusion bloodysword and from the share of Manager Kim's payment, I had a total of about 500,000 to my name.

I also had 3 blisolnites and 2 ansilites.

I used the blisolnites to create one more bloodysword and sold it for 350,000.

So I was able to raise my savings to 750,000 after taxes and such. With this much, it was enough to buy my own small apartment now.

Just kidding. But it was true.

My own house....something I wasn't able to fathom just two months ago was now within reach.

“But not yet.”

If I just had one more ansilite, I could create a level 3 equipment.

I could create a Honcheon sword or a rubicon sword.

Between the two, the Honcheon sword was more expensive but since the items used to create it cost more...the value of the two were pretty much the same.

I could make so much more money, I couldn't stop now.

I needed to get ready to go into a level 3 dungeon.

A month and a half had passed since the level 1 dungeons had disappeared.

Things had been quiet since then but no one knew if and when the level 2 dungeons might also disappear.

I had to be prepared for that eventuality. If it was ever going to come.

# Chapter 54

---

-DingDong.

The doorbell rang. There was only one person who would come by my house at this time of the night.

“What did I tell you about coming around whenever you....”

-Bow.

“Good evening.”

“Uh....”

It was glasses girl.

I let her in the house with some confusion. The house was a mess but, since she was the one who came without giving me a heads up, I figured it was her problem.

I made some coffee and set a cup in front of her. She looked a bit anxious.

“So what brings you here?”

“Just...just....”

It seemed she had something she needed to say.

“You have something you need to say right?”

“That, that’s true...”

Jesus, I was starting to get real curious at this point.

Was it that?

“Is it by any chance....”

“Yes?”

Glasses girl raised her head in surprise.

“Are you here to talk about the exclusivity contract?”

“What?”

“If it’s that, you don’t have to worry too much about it. Since you didn’t technically take the item yet and we didn’t write up and sign the contract yet. If you have a change of heart just let me know right now.”

“That, that’s...”

“If you want to join a different team, you’re free to do so. But I’ll say one thing. There are teams just as bad or worse than team Ezekiel all over the country now. You’re a decent hunter but, at your current level, you do realize you’re not really too strong right? It’s going to be hard for you to join a decent team. I’m not saying this for selfish reasons – I’m saying this as your friend.”

“....yes.”

Glasses girl looked at me with a blank face and nodded her head. I figured this would be enough to sway her.

“Then are we done here?”

“That’s...well...the reason I came here today is...”

Slam!

“SunbehOppa! I’m here!”

Jung Sooah burst through the front door and came in. Seeing how she was holding bags in both hands, it seemed she planned to hang out all day at my house and maybe sleep over again.

“Where did you learn that bad habit of opening the door to other peoples’ homes whenever you want?”



“The door was already unlocked. Oh? Yeonkyoung’s here? What’s going on?”

“That’s....I wanted to say thank you for all that party head has done for me...”

Glasses girl started looking through her bag and took something out.

It was a bag of Kimchi and varieties of other side dishes.

“....What’s all this?”

“My mother personally made all these side dishes to give to party head. I told her how you lived alone and so she made them all.”

“Oh she didn’t need to go through all that trouble...I can just buy it.”

That was what I said, but I was secretly happy inside.

I was especially happy to see homemade marinated meat. If I wanted to eat something like this outside, I would need to pay \$10 for just one serving.

Just because I was making good money now didn’t mean I wanted to use it all willy nilly.

“Um....I also brought something too.”

“What? You too?”

“Look look look.”

Slam.

She had brought a box full of spam, hams, instant noodles, variety tuna cans, and frozen dumplings.

Wow....such a difference.

“I came to make you food today. I felt bad for always bumming food at your house.”

“Uh....since the shelf life for all this is pretty long, let’s eat the food that Yeonkyoung brought over today.”

“I’ll cook.”

Glasses girl got up from her seat. Then Jung Sooah said.

“You know how to cook?”

“Yes, I learned from my mom at home.”

Now that she said this, I saw that there was a fresh wound on her hand. It wasn't something she would get from her bow string. Surely she didn't just learn it so that she could especially cook something today.

“I'm going to make food too.”

“We both know you don't know how to cook.”

“I know how to make instant ramen ok?”

“No. I think I'd prefer to eat this than that...”

“Hmph. I guess you just don't know how delicious my Jjajang Ramen tastes. Just don't be surprised by its deliciousness after you've had it.”

She said this as she folded up both her sleeves.

My kitchen was small.

There was no way the both of them could cook in my kitchen comfortably together. They looked incredibly cramped.

I didn't think they needed to go through all the trouble but, since

I was the one doing the eating, I decided to just see how it would end up.

As they continued their shenanigans in the kitchen, I looked through the internet news.

The incident from the Baeksapyoung dungeon made the main page of the news.

[38 hunters from Team Ezekiel all dead in dungeon. Have still been unable to find the bodies...]

The Baeksapyoung dungeon was now closed.

The dungeon inspectors looked for the dead bodies for days but there was no way they would find anything. Because they had evaporated – down to the very last strand of hair.

[There is word that another similar incident had also occurred at the Bookhansan dungeon as well. According to the officials...]

The news seemed to have made the connection with the Bookhansan dungeon incident.

I guess it should be expected since all trace of hunters had disappeared from both scenes.

I'm sure that soon the police will make the connection that our

team had been present both times.

All that ran through my head was that it would be annoying.

But that was it. Because no matter how much they looked, they wouldn't find anything incriminating.

\*\*\*

Oddly enough, Jung Sooh's Jjajang Ramen really hit the spot.

Of course the food that glasses girl brought made me happy too.

Because you could taste the care that goes into homemade food after not having tasted any for a long time.

The problem was that my stomach couldn't handle eating the entirety of what these two girls had made.

And I could see them watching me eat the entire time.

Is this a new form of torture? Are they trying to cause me indigestion?

"You guys aren't eating?"

"I'll eat after watching SunbehOppa eat everything."

“I’m not that hungry right now.”

Somehow I was able to eat everything they had made.

In all my life, this was the most I had eaten in one sitting.

If there was a digestion upgrade from my effort skill, I’m sure I would have leveled up.

“Then I’ll do the dishes.”

“Huh? I was going to do it.”

Jung Sooah hurriedly grabbed some dishes and followed me into the kitchen. Behind her, glasses girl had picked up a few dishes and trotted into the kitchen too.

“It’s fine. Just go kill time on the computer or read a comic on the bed or something. I’ll do this.”

“Ok.”

“Ok.”

The two of them finally relented.

When I came into the room after doing the dishes, I saw the two of them rummaging through my “New Folder”.

Haha.

“.....Just what are you guys doing?”

“Ah?”

Jung Sooah said as she turned around in surprise. Glasses girl said.

“So I guess party head organizes things in this manner.”

“Because I have so much paperwork. Organizing it all in alphabetical order caused some problems.”

I had tons of paperwork on dungeon locations, monsters, and items. They were organized by levels and then again by order of danger.

Of course general information on dungeons are easy to find but that folder was an amalgamation of information that isn't easy to come by.

# Chapter 55

---

Sooah made a face as if she was annoyed about something.

“What?”

“Isn’t this where you’re supposed to hide like porn and stuff?”

“This girl...what kind of guy do you take me for....”

There’s no way I would hide that kind of stuff in such an obvious spot.

I made it so that even if you did a word search, you wouldn’t find anything.

And the whole reason I did that much is because of her. Stop making my single life so complicated. Jeez.

“Waaa.”

Jung Sooah lay down on my bed and started going through a comicbook as if it were her own home.

Glasses girl sat at my desk and resumed surfing the internet.

I somehow started feeling as if I were the one out of place in my



own room. What the hell.

“Today’s a rest day. Don’t you guys have plans?”

“Speaking of rest days, don’t you have any plans?”

“I like staying home. I don’t like going out anyway. I’m an introvert. And even if I did go out, there’d be nothing for me to do. It’s not like I have any friends to hang out with either.”

“You have a friend right here.”

“Here too.”

The both of them raised their hands.

“So are you saying we should go out and do something?”

“I mean the weather is nice – maybe we should go out to the park.”

I nodded my head. I guess that could be fun.

\*\*\*

Swoosh Swoosh!

“I’m wearing a dress..”

“Come on! Proper posture!”

Tap.

“Ok.”

Sooah responded as she lowered her upper body.

Since we were coming out to the park, we decided to get some practice in. Because if you didn’t practice these kinds of things often, your body starts forgetting.

I made glasses girl do some shooting with the practice bow I had from my college days.

“How peaceful.”

I finally felt ok. It was the first time I felt so uncomfortable in my own home. There was a weird kind of aura in that room that I couldn’t figure out. But this was good.

While the two of them kept at it, I looked through my manual.

The item storage was already full. I checked my stats next.

Skill type: Effort (o). Skill has the ability to use reward points to increase physical abilities.

Extra skill/option: None

Proficiency: 19

Reward Points: 4530

Abilities: Strength 200, Endurance 300, Reflexes 150, Focus 150, Defense 150

Upgrade: 26/100

I had saved up quite a bit of reward points.

I should have used them to raise up my abilities at Baeksapyoung (Flat Sand Bar) dungeon, but things got so crazy I wasn't able to get around to doing it.

Luckily I didn't have to go through all the crazy training to raise my abilities anymore. I was actually worried for a moment that I might have had to run a cross country marathon at some point.

Hm. What should I raise up next though.

Not including Endurance, I could probably raise up everything else at least two times with the points I had. Since I have some reliable equipment now like the Honcheon sword, I guess it would make more sense to raise up reflexes and defense rather than strength.

I pressed the reflexes tab.

Tap.

Whoa. It felt like I really pressed on something real. So real.

- Would you like to use your reward points towards increasing your reflexes?

Yes, No. Two options appeared. I pushed my finger to the “yes” option.

- You have successfully increased your reflexes. Proficiency has been raised to 20. Level 2 dungeons are now scheduled to be erased.

“What?”

What the hell does that mean?

“SunbehOppa?”

“Party head?”

Both girls stared at me with concern in their eyes.

This is wrong.

We finally came to a point where we could confidently clear a level 2 dungeon.

But now it's saying they're going to be erased...? So we have to start from scratch again?

SHIT SHIT SHIT! EFFING SHIT!

Shouldn't they at least give us some time to get used to clearing level 2 dungeons and gain more experience so that we don't die in level 3s?

"Cancel! Cancel! No. Shit. What the hell am I supposed to do now?"

Since there wasn't a cancel button, I kept yelling the word out loud like a crazy person. But the manual didn't respond.

I hurriedly took off the glasses. Maybe if I'm not wearing it, it'll stop whatever crazy thing it was trying to do.

Like hell.

I put the glasses back on.

\*\*\*

Reflexes 200, Reward Points 2530.

Proficiency 20.

\*\*\*

I should have realized the correlation earlier. It was all there. Right? It makes sense. As I increase the proficiency of my skill, it resulted in erasing of dungeons.

Now that I think about it, it was when I clocked in 10 in my proficiency that Level 1 dungeons had disappeared. 10 minutes hadn't even passed when I got the call from Han Joonseok with that bit of happy news.

Ring!

Yeh. Like now.

“Hello?”

-Party head! BAD NEWS!...

“Level 2 dungeons are all gone?”

-What? What are you talking about? What do you mean level 2 dungeons are gone?

Hm? What the hell’s going on then?

“Wait. Then what do you mean bad news?”

-The Yellow Sea...the Yellow Sea disappeared!

“....what?”

I almost dropped my phone.

\*\*\*

Once we got back to my place and searched the internet, Han Joonseok had gotten it wrong.

It’s not that the sea disappeared.

Land had appeared out of nowhere.

“What in the world...”

Jung Sooah had her mouth wide open.

The new land that had appeared was huge.

It was strange that new land of this size had appeared without so much as an earthquake or tsunami.

Just looking at this it was obvious that this was not natural.

“This is crazy.”

The news was lit. I wonder if they had felt this way 50 years ago when the monsters had first shown up.

“They’re saying it’s not just in our country...”

In Africa, a new island appeared next to Madagascar.

In North America, the Yucatan Peninsula was now connected by land with Florida, Alaska, and Siberia.

“Wow...does this mean we need a new world map?”

Jung Sooah said in wonder.



“We’re lucky if that’s the extent of it...”

It wasn’t clear if this was it. It probably wasn’t.

“Isn’t it good that we now have more land? Our country was too small as it was.”

“No. We have a lot of land...we just can’t use it properly because of all the monsters.”

I continued surfing the internet for some answers.

\*\*\*

-[A number of monsters found on the new lands. These monsters are found to be low level monsters of levels 1 and 2s. None others are reported to have been found as of yet.]

-[About 10 minutes ago, coinciding with the upheaval of the new continents, disappearance of level 2 dungeons have been confirmed. It is reported that the government feels the two incidents are related in some manner and an investigation is under way.]

\*\*\*

Damn it. So the level 2 dungeons did disappear.

The government had decided to name the new land as “The West Sea”.

But now there was the not so small matter of Korea being connected to China.

The idea of joint management of the new land was quickly ignored.

China became so adamant that the new land was theirs that they deployed a large number of hunters to forcefully seize it.

And the Korean government immediately followed suit.

Then the Chinese government made the threat that they would not trade any agriculture to which the Korean government threatened to remove all hunter markets.

And so finally China was forced to take a step back.

At the time, the removal of hunter markets would spell disaster for China.

So in the end, they came to a kind of agreement.

\*\*\*

“So what happened?”

Cho Youngoo asked. We had all met up at the Cafe in Shinchon to talk about the recent events.

“It seems they will be sending out as many hunters as they can to the West Sea. In terms of hunters, Korea has the most and of the highest levels.”

“Well, that’s all thanks to Wheeseung teacher.”

He was the first real hunter...and the strongest of them all.

It was thanks to him that Korea was able to corner the hunter market and raise the levels in a shorter amount of time than other countries – though most of them were at level 3 and 4.

Anyone at and above a level 5 were considered the best of the best.

These were the hunters who had been raising their skills since 50 years ago.

“In general, our hunter power is at least 3 times that of those in China. But the problem is...”

“That China’s population is 30 times that of Korea.”

Han Joonseok finished.

Since the day of the disaster when the monsters first appeared, the population of Korea near the Yellow Sea had stayed at a steady 20,000 while the population of China along their border was at 500,000.

“But it would be difficult for China to exert their power.”

“How is that? Now that the level 1 and level 2 dungeons are gone, even if we just stationed those hunters who are now out of jobs at the West Sea...the sheer population of China...”

“Well the real problem is whether or not the West Sea is even worth fighting over.”

Everyone became quiet and lost in thought at what I had just said.

There was plenty of land filled with monsters.

But that wasn't the issue.

The issue was that we couldn't lay around while we had perfectly good land snatched out from under us...even if it was riddled with monsters.

“Well, even if it isn't worth fighting over...we now have no

choice to go to that land. Since all the level 2 dungeons are gone now, that's the only place we can really hunt now. Who knows, maybe the hunt might be even better since they did say that only level 1 and level 2 monsters were seen there. But before that."

I looked to Jong Sawon.

"Can you come with us?"

"...I will do whatever you ask."

"The Yellow Sea is very big. We might not bump into that monster for another 6 months."

"It doesn't matter. No matter the species, a monster is a monster."

"Understood. Then we're all agreed."

"But would we be able to move in the same parties? Don't you think the government will likely form groups themselves based on equipment and skill levels?"

# Chapter 56

---

Han Joonseok said,

“They do make exceptions. Some pre-existing parties are allowed to move independently. But they are required to register. So it might be a good idea to apply...”

“Wow. Then does that mean we get to create a name for our party?”

Jung Sooah asked excitedly.

“I thought we would just call it Team Jeon Sangmin.”

Everyone gave me a funny look.

“Doesn’t this make it easy?”

“But the name is like branding. Using just your name is kind of...”

“Then do you have a better name in mind?”

“Team. Sooah Love. How’s that?”

“You want to die? Do you want us to die from embarrassment

before even going up against any monsters?”

“I don’t think the team name really makes too much of a difference but. Wouldn’t it be better if we went for a name that had more impact? Like...Team Joonseok’s the best....”

“...You were that kind of person?”

“I was kidding. I guess this is harder than it seems huh?”

“How’s team Zero? Party head and unnie both have level 0 skills. Plus it’s easy to remember.”

“Hm. Something about that name sounds too common.”

Manager Kim slowly shook his head.

Even after bouncing one name after another off each other for the longest time, we couldn’t find one we agreed on.

Right when I was about to just decide on using Team Jeon Sangmin, a word whispered in my mind.

“Delta.”

“What? What’s that?”

“I think that’s the name of the new system. Though I’m not sure.”

That was what the manual had said. Delta v.01.

“Hm. It’s not bad.”

“I agree!”

Sooah raised her hand.

And so we had decided to name our party, Team Delta.

\*\*\*

If you take route 32, you now come across a beach that used to be the Manripo Beach.

Once a desolate place, it was now packed with thousands of people. There were temporary residences stationed in addition to a busy shopping center.

It was where our country and the West Sea was now connected.

“Wow, this isn’t a joke.”

Sooah said with her head out the car window.



Where there should have been the sea was an endless horizon of new land.

The land was nearly completely flat with some small hills and boulders sprinkled here and there.

“Aren’t there any mountains? I think this is the first time I’ve seen such flat lands in our country like this...”

“From what we know, the highest point is about 500 meters.”

I answered.

The Yellow Sea topography was well known – satellites are amazing.

It seemed that the high level hunters have been getting dropped into the new land by helicopter already.

“But do you think that’s true? That the parties able to clear an area of the new land will be given partial ownership of it.”

Cho Youngoo, driving the vehicle, asked.

“Since it’s coming from the government, I’m sure it’s not entirely false. But the “partial” aspect of it is a bit iffy. It might just be some sweet talk to seduce a bunch of hunters here.”

“So what are they going to do when the hunters all come together and ask them for payment by land.”

“If the government was smart enough to think that ahead, they wouldn’t have operated the dungeons in that half-assed manner.”

Homeland Busan Dungeon Management Team.

These were the guys who had charged exorbitant admission fees while paying pennies on the dollar for ores found in the dungeons.

On top of that, since they charged taxes on everything as well – you could say they were making income three ways.

The problem I had with them was that they had zero intention of cultivating general parties.

If they had just made the admission fees even a bit more affordable or paid a bit more for the ores, general parties probably would have flourished.

And if that had happened, they would have been able to level up faster and we would have had that much more hunters in our country.

But rather than reduce the fees, they hiked the admissions every year.

It was probably the government's main source of income at the end of the day.

The hunters were probably akin to a goose that lays golden eggs to them.

But China was worse – from what I heard. They paid their hunters a very low salary and worked them like slaves. Talk about a disincentivizer. If it wasn't true, China would have easily overthrown us with the sheer volume.

Sooah and glasses girl disappeared somewhere saying they wanted to look around while Manager Kim stayed in the car.

It took 30 minutes for us to complete the procedure of registering our party.

“It was faster than I thought it would be. I thought there would be way more people than this too.”

Han Joonseok said.

“There are probably a lot of people standing by for now. No matter how sweet the payout is, it's never more precious than a life. And one team can keep only so much land clear of monsters. And who said there are only level 1 and level 2 monsters. This is all so new.”

“And the goal should be the reward from ores and drops from monsters...not the land. Keeping the land clear of monsters that constantly reappear...it’s the government’s way of pushing off that annoying job to hunters with the golden carrot of land.”

Han Joonseok said in return. I agreed.

“In any case, those two are a bit late in getting back.”

Cho Youngoo murmured. It had been over 10 minutes since Jung Soah and glasses girl headed over to the stalls.

“They probably got lost track of time doing a bit of shopping.”

“The only thing they sell here are basic food supplies and hunting equipment. There probably isn’t anything they’d be interested in...”

That was when it happened.

POW!

A red light burst into the sky from behind a container.

“That’s...?”

It was far, but I recognized what it was. A flame enchanted

arrow.

“Could it be Ms. Bae Yeonkyoung...?”

“Let’s go see first.”

Tap!

I kicked at the ground. I ran almost fast enough to leave an afterimage.

What could it be?

Seeing me running at such a fast speed, the surprised onlookers hurriedly moved out of the way. I left a trail of dirt clouds in my wake.

I was able to find them after running several hundred meters in less than 30 seconds.

This was because there was a crowd of hunters that seemed to be threatening some other person...or two.

“We said we already have a party!”

Sooah yelled out.

“All you have to say is you don’t like us if you don’t like us. You don’t have to lie like that. Hurting our pride.”

Whew.

I lightly sighed as I pushed aside the group of hunters surrounding Sooah and glasses girl.

“Ah ah....?”

All I did was push them lightly with one hand but a bunch of them toppled over like dominoes.

“Sunbeh Oppa!”

“Party head!”

A look of relief came over both their expressions as they caught sight of me.

A thick hand clamped over my shoulder.

“Who the hell are you? These bitches said they had a party already...is that you? And you look weak as hell too...”

Crack.

“Aaaahk!”

I probably broke that hand.

“We were wondering where you guys were. And you guys end up being here getting pushed around like this?”

“We were just minding our own business when those guys came and threatened us to join them on a raid.”

“Is that true?”

Nod.

Glasses girl nodded her head.

I heard a rough yell from behind me.

“This bastard, do you know what the hell you just did?”

“Do I have to know?”

I turned around. There were 12 of them. And all of them looked like they had bad attitudes.

I knew exactly what to expect from guys who would threaten girls at a place like this. Trash.

“I guess we need to teach you a lesson. Since you were the one who made the first move, I’m sure you won’t have any problems with us showing you a thing or two.”

“I know that you want to justify starting a fight but do you think that kind of reasoning will go over with the officials?”

“As if they’ll really care.”

“I guess.”

All of this was something that happened suddenly. There wasn’t really anyone on standby regulating it.

Other hunters, seeing the mood, started backing away.

“Sunbeh Oppa...”

Squeeze.

Sooah grabbed the bottom of my shirt in a squeeze.

“Stop trying to get close.”

“...But I was so scared. Really.”



“Well..ok then.”

I put on my glasses.

Manual on.

Items: Level 2 armor and bloody sword.

“What..what...?”

All 12 of them went from surprise to panic instantly.

“What? Did you think I’d fight all of you guys with my bare hands?”

“Shit. Everyone hold your weapons!”

In a matter of seconds, things got even more heated. Here we go.

# Chapter 57

---

I was probably barely 3 meters away from the group of idiots. Close enough where if we just stretched out our arms toward each other, we would be able to touch fingertips.

Right at the peak of it all...

“Yo. Who is this?”

A familiar face peeked out from among them.

Comically slanted eyes, a pointed chin, and a long face.

Just like a weasel.

“I was wondering if you were alive. I didn’t think I’d meet you someplace like this.”

Both ends of his lips began to curl up.

“Uh....who are you?”

“....You’re saying you don’t remember me?”

“No. Your face is a bit familiar, but I can’t seem to quite place you.”

“I’m SoulPredator Ban Shihyung. Come on. We even did a raid in a dungeon together.”

“Uh...I don’t remember such an embarrassing name as that.”

“Keuk...then do you remember this guy?”

He brought into view a magician holding a cane.

“Ah?”

“I guess you remember now huh?”

“Sorry. My mistake. I thought he reminded me of a friend.”

“This bastard....”

Ban Shihyung started grinding his teeth. I guess he was kind of annoyed.

Keukeu

I could hear Sooah and glasses girl trying to stifle their giggles behind me.

His face started to turn a bright red now. I guess it must have been pretty embarrassing to put on such a grand entrance for naught.

Of course I remembered who he was. I just wanted to piss him off a bit.

He was the party head I had raided a dungeon with before. He was the one who partnered with the magician to purposely retire a bunch of his own party members. That bastard.

He was someone I didn't have any desire of acknowledging.

"Well, that's fine. I was going to let it slide since we knew one another...but now."

"Ah! Now I remember! Yeah. You were the one who threw friendly fire at your party members right?"

"What?"

"I figured you wouldn't live long since you did PK as casually as someone would eat food so I'd erased you from memory!"

“This...this bastard...shut that damn mouth!”

Not only was his face red now, it looked like it would explode like those cartoon thermometers that get really really red at the top.

I had to keep myself from laughing.

“Hey. Head. Is that true?”

“What do you mean is that true! You think I would do something like that?”

“No....I never saw it myself...but I did hear some rumors...”

“Shut up! Don’t believe some nonsense coming from a youngster like that!”

After shutting up his little group, he walked over to me.

“I was about to ask you to join my group because I thought you had some skills but...”

“I’ll save you the trouble and say nahhhh.”

“Keuk...”

I could hear him grinding his teeth again. Maybe I should stop now.

“I don’t know what kind of nerve you have with just the three of you...But you think you can win against all of us? Especially with those bitches that look like they can’t do shit.”

“I wonder. I don’t think you’re counting correctly.”

Pat!

A golden light rose above their heads. It was manager Kim’s sleep magic.

“Euu....I’m tired...”

“....why am I...so....”

Drop. Drop.

His spell dropped five of them to sleep.

“What, what the hell’s going on!”

Ban Shihyung started jumping around in a circle to figure out what just happened. Then he saw behind him, about 20 meters away, a middle aged man holding up a cane.

And next to him stood Cho Youngoo, Han Joonseok, and Jong Sawon...all in a row.

Han Joonseok had his bow drawn and locked on the weasel already.

“Now, it looks like we’re a bit more even doesn’t it?”

Out of the total 15 (not the initial 12 I counted), 5 were now asleep. We had a total of 7.

It was fine though because Jong Sawon, Cho Youngoo, and I had level 3 equipment.

Ban Shihyung was just a level 2 hunter if my memory serves correctly.

“Ahhhhhhhk! Shit! Shit shit shit!”

He started to kick at the ground after seeing he couldn’t win.

“I’ll! Just watch! I’ll get you! Just watch!”

“Whatever.”

I shrugged my shoulders as I watched them make their retreat.

How embarrassing. Soon after, Han Joonseok and the rest caught up to where we were.

Han Joonseok said with a wooden face.

“SoulPredator Ban Shihyung...It’s a name I’ve heard before.”

“I guess he’s pretty well known.”

“Not really...there’s just word about him because he’s been going around with a group of 30 people.”

“Looks like he has only 15 now including himself.”

“Well, you know how rumors go. But is it ok to just let him leave like that? I’m sure he’ll try to exact some kind of petty revenge later.”

Han Joonseok looked worried. I can’t say I wasn’t a little concerned myself.

I thought we should have handled it...but this wasn’t the place for it. Too many prying eyes.

“There are too many witnesses. It’s not like we could kill him. And if we took care to not kill them, we could end up getting unnecessarily hurt. Plus...he’s riled up. If he makes a move, he won’t do it with a calm and calculated mind.”



“...You’re expecting him to strike back?”

“I’m just thinking worst case scenario.”

Both sides knew fighting here would not do.

But we would be heading to the Yellow Sea road shortly.

That land had no governing laws. It was a land of monsters. It was a land where anything could happen and no one would bat an eye.

Ban Shihyung...he was someone I could handle anytime.

After finishing up, we all got into Cho Youngoo’s car and headed to the Yellow Sea road. This was only possible because it had 4 wheel drive. It was a land without any paved roads so the car bumped the entire way.

Cho Youngoo said,

“I guess I’ll have to get it properly maintained later...”

“I’ll be sure to compensate you properly for that.”

“No. That’s not necessary.”

“We’re all using it together. I need to do at least that much.”

If it wasn’t for his car, I would have had to purchase a car myself. It was only right to pay him for maintenance.

\*\*\*

After riding for 10 minutes, we saw some monsters ahead in the distance.

They were in a groups of a little over 10. But they were just toddling around – they probably didn’t spot us yet.

We braked to look around and saw that there were parties already engaging in fights.

“Let’s get started too.”

The sun was starting to set.

We fought against cave wolves, goblins, wedge moles, and water slimes all day.

We covered a distance of about 10 kilometers in that time – slower than walking speed.

“Whew...let’s call it a day.”

We parked the car and made a fire so we could take a break.

Since monsters typically avoided fires, it had that added benefit.

Of course there were monsters that didn’t avoid fires, but it was better than being attacked in the dark.

All we needed to create a bonfire were some dry shrubs.

There weren’t any tall trees, but there were quite a few shrubs that came up to the waist.

There were even some animal that weren’t monsters.

This made me start to wonder if this was not land that rose from the sea.

“I think this is the most monsters I’ve seen since ever.”

Jung Sooah commented while poking at the fire with a stick.

I agreed. We had probably killed about 150 monsters today. All of them were level 1s.

Thanks to that, we were able to collect over 70 ores. Save for a

few I needed to use on Item Fusions, I put the rest towards upgrading.

Carrying them around would only make the car heavy. It was better to invest them into the upgrade.

But it was definitely a lot of ores. Altogether, they probably had a market value of 90,000 dollars.

“It’s like a land of prosperity here.”

Han Joonseok murmured.

Everyone nodded in agreement. And this was from covering only 10 kilometers of land bordering the Yellow Sea.

If it was like this here, just how many monsters would there be towards the center. I couldn’t even imagine how many ores and items we would be able to pick up there.

Everyone’s face was filled with excitement and hope.

“Let’s organize everything for now.”

Three total dropped items. They weren’t really anything special – we did only kill level 1 monsters.

\*\*\*

Longsword (1): Generic sword. Can give damage to level 1 monsters.

Agile Sword (1): Increase reflexes by 15%.

Backpack (1): Can carry 30% more items in the bag. Weight of the items are 30% lighter.

\*\*\*

“All three items will be used by Sooah.”

“Huh..? Really?”

Sooah said with a dumb look on her face.

“I’m using the same method as before. I will keep all the ores while we pass dropped items to those it is best suited for. Whatever is left over will be sold and distributed evenly per member. I hope everyone agrees with me on this.”

“Well, I guess it’s easier to do it this way anyway. Plus items will keep dropping so it’s not a bad deal.”

Han Joonseok responded. I nodded my head.

There would be plenty of items to go around.

# Chapter 58

---

“Monsters here are generally estimated to be level 1s. This means that the price of level 1 items is bound to soar back up in the markets. And that – that means that we will be making far more money on what we earn than we have been.”

This was no exaggeration. If we went and sold just two of the items over there, we would be able to get a return of 300,000 dollars now.

“Wow....”

Glasses girl raised her hand to her chest and took a deep breath. I guessed she probably started to do the math in her head.

“But if that’s the case, wouldn’t it be unfair to you party head?”

If we were doing the pay out the traditional way by contribution distribution, I would have earned half of 400,000 dollars today. So it would seem like I was taking a loss.

But I didn’t think of it that way. This was not a dungeon, and we were not a group of people who were expendable to one another. We were not a temporary team.

“We are a real team. I believe that strengthening my team members indirectly strengthens me too. So I hope that everyone here thinks of it that way as well.”

There was a limit to what I can achieve by just getting strong alone.

This was just like raising my abilities. I couldn't just raise one. I had to raise them all to be truly stronger. Like synergy.

And the stronger we all get, the more we would all be able to earn faster.

I looked at it as an investment into our future.

“Well, I guess an item fit for me will fall at some point too.”

Manager Kim said as he lay down on a mat he had rolled onto the ground.

It seemed everyone was in agreement. Because more items will drop tomorrow than did today.

We decided to switch off keeping lookout two at a time. Some slept in the car while some slept in front of the fire outside.

And I – I had no intention of sleeping that night.

“Will you be ok? Won't you get tired?”



Glasses girl, chosen to be the first to stand watch....no Yeonkyoung...asked.

“Even if you fall asleep today, never take your hands off your bow.”

“Is it because of them?”

Ban Shihyung. There was a higher probability he would come after us today rather than later.

Because as time went on and they went on to earn items, they would end up being more concerned about doing that than coming after us.

\*\*\*

I could hear sounds of insects.

I listened as vigilantly as I could. Cho Youngoo, who was up as lookout, was fast asleep inside the car. I thought to wake him up, but decided to let him rest.

I had endurance buff so I could handle it, but I’m pretty sure it was harder for everyone else.

The night sky was surprisingly still very light. There was zero light pollution and there was no smoke either.

I wondered if there were some otherworldly powers or forces at work.

There were stars sprinkled all over the sky. A thought came into my mind that I wouldn't ever be able to see something like this anywhere else but here.

Flutter.

I heard a sound. There was nowhere to hide here. I looked toward where the sound came from.

“Mr. Cho Youngoo.”

“Eung....chicken....I want to stop frying it...”

This man, what kind of dream is he having?

I shook him awake.

“What, what is it?”

“There's someone watching us. About 50 meters away. Since they're trying to be quiet about it, I'm pretty sure it's human.”

“Surely...it's not them?”

“I’m not sure yet. But let’s start waking everyone up. It would be best if they saw us wake and run away but...if they don’t...”

“We have no choice but to fight.”

I nodded my head. I woke up Manager Kim and helmet guy who had both been asleep by the bonfire.

Cho Youngoo opened the car door and woke everyone else up.

As soon as we started to move in earnest, I could feel a surprised energy coming from Cho Youngoo’s side.

Han Joonseok came up beside me.

“Can you tell who they are?”

He had the Optical Ruby Ring in his possession. That item allowed the holder to see as if it were day.

“There are exactly 16 of them. Ban Shihyung is among them....”

“Everyone get ready for battle.”

Ping!

An arrow lodged into the ground right in front of my foot.

We were lit up by the light from the bonfire while they were still hiding in the dark. We were at a disadvantage.

I could hear Ban Shihyung's weasely voice.

"You guys are quick."

"I figured if you were to attack, it would be today."

"If you die here, people will just chalk it up to a monster attack. It's not too late you know...I can still give you one last chance?"

"...."

I didn't say a word.

But he continued talking.

He had us outnumbered and was at a tactical advantage. He thought there was no way he could lose.

"Hand over all your equipment and work under me. Then I'll let you keep your lives."

"Isn't it kind of dark?"

“What are you....?”

I took two rods I had on my belt and twisted off the tops.

Chiii.

At the end of the rods, a bright light began to sprout out.

“Flares?”

“Have you ever heard of ground markers?”

Since it was in english, it sounded real fancy but they were just long lasting signal flares. Because real flares are expensive.

Tap. Tap.

I threw both ground markers at the bastards. Now they were clear as day.

“Shit. Attack!”

At Ban Shihyung’s order, Manager Kim started his sleep spell. A golden light floated above our opponents.

And four of them dropped right to the ground.

In that time, a few arrows flew in our direction as well.

Even though we now had the light of the markers, the arrows were still barely visible in the night.

Ting! Ting!

Cho Youngoo had his shield up and was blocking off the attacks.

Slice!

“Keuk?”

Han Joonseok’s own arrow pierced the neck of an opponent.

10 left.

I had a longsword in my left hand and the Honcheon sword in my right. It was better to fight against many with this sword than the bloodysword.

“Ahhhh!”

Seeing first blood being drawn, they seemed to go crazy and ran right at us. But they were slow. A good indicator they didn’t have

any items with buffs.

At best they had maybe one or two men with level 2 equipment.

I felt bad for them.

This wasn't a fight.

Boom!

My Honcheon sword made a small explosion. My opponent's sword shattered and the pieces lodged in his arm.

"Ahhk!"

Slice!

Jong Sawon's sword sliced right through the man's armor – met with almost zero resistance. A waterfall of red showered into the air.

"Shit! Throw the fireball!"

As soon as Ban Shihyung made the command, the magician raised his cane. A fireball the size of a person's head began to form.

Han Joonseok's arrow shot across the air.

“Keuk?”

Hit in the back with the arrow, the magician gurgled up some blood and collapsed to the ground.

This was the stalker at work.



# Chapter 59

---

As soon as the magician fell to the ground, any illusion that they might win shattered as well. The only reason they had continued fighting even as their comrades were dying left and right was because they had trusted in the power of Ban Shihyung and the magician.

But, not only did we have zero damages on our side, they now only had 5 people standing on theirs – Ban Shihyung, 2 archers, and 2 warriors.

The rest were either dead or fast asleep.

“Eu....what the hell...this doesn’t even make sense...how can something like this...”

Despair was etched all over Ban Shihyung’s weasely face.

I slowly walked toward them.

Two of the cowards started to grovel.

“Please...please spare us.”

“We only did it because that bastard made us....!”

Slice!!

[+100]

[+200]

I struck out in one clean cut with my sword and sliced both their necks.

There was no way we could let anyone out of this alive. It would be a massacre.

“Heuk??”

The two archers behind them dropped their weapons and started to run away.

Jong Sawon chased after them.

Han Joonseok and Bae Yeongyoung aimed their arrows at the fleeing backs as well. Now we only had the one bastard and the sleeping fools to deal with.

The despair bled out of from his eyes and was quickly replaced with anger.

“Do you have any last words?”

“Fuck off. You think I’d go down that easy!”

He threw something to the ground.

It was a smoke grenade.

As the grenade continued to spin and spew out smoke, it not only messed with my vision, but it also covered any sounds I could rely on.

But that was the same for him too.

I started to swing all around me with my Honcheon sword.

Slam!

I felt something hit the end of my blade at last.

“Keuk!”

Ban Shihyung was bumped right out of the cover of smoke from my explosive hit.

Seeing that his armor was just fine, it was probably a level 3 equipment.

But he probably still felt the explosive impact of my weapon. He

held the side of his waist in obvious discomfort and started to cough uncontrollably.

“Cough. Cough!”

“I have something I want to ask you.”

“Keuk....you want to say you have something you’re curious about now?...after all this...??”

“Why did you decide to attack us?”

“What? Weren’t you ready to attack us too?”

“I was just prepared for any eventuality. I knew you were trash, but I didn’t think you would really go through so much trouble to come after us like this.”

“Keukeukeu...bastard. Then you should have just died quietly.”

“Seriously? That’s not my style.”

Ban Shihyung stared at the ground for a long time. Then said.

“If I tell you something...will you let me live?”

“No.”

“Keuk....bastard. I like that you’re honest. Cough.”

I might have fucked up something inside because he started to cough up blood as he said.

“...We originally had over 30 people in our party.”

“So what happened to the rest?”

“They all died. Because of the hunter bastards.”

“Hunters?”

“Yeah. The first day that the West Sea appeared. There was a group that entered the land first. They had hunted the monsters here and amassed together a bunch of equipment. That’s when they realized. That this land was a gold mine. How many people do you think would want to share such a gold mine with others?”

“You’re saying they killed other hunters for that reason?”

“They had another reason too. Even if you kill someone on this land and they have the equipment on them...the equipment doesn’t disappear.”

\*\*\*

We left no one alive.

We all gathered in front of the bonfire as we waited for the bodies to evaporate.

“Seems things are worse than we imagined.”

“But it’s no surprise. Since uncouth things were happening even in the dungeons that were ‘overseen’ by the operators and officials...it’s no surprise that things like this would happen on land where no one is monitoring anything.”

Han Joonseok said thoughtfully – and everyone nodded their heads.

Our biggest threat were not just the monsters anymore. Anyone they potentially meet on this land could now all be enemies.

“What do you think of just entering level 3 dungeons for now?”

“It would be fine if we just fought against the normal level 3 monsters there....but it would be hard if we ran into any irregulars.”

I guessed that the irregulars that would appear in a level 3 dungeon would be at least level 4...and there was the chance we could find ourselves faced against a level 5 irregular...

With our current equipment and skill, it might be too much for us right now.

And it didn't make too much sense for us to leave all the level 1 monsters we could hunt to try hunting after level 3 monsters.

“Let's think about it some more tonight before we make a final decision on how to move forward.”

Everyone nodded their heads.

Once all the bodies evaporated, we started to inspect what was left behind and the items that dropped.

It was a bit easier now to understand why Ban Shihyung had attacked us.

“This is all....”

Cho Youngoo's mouth was wide open in wonder.

There was a small hill of items in front of us.

About 30 items left behind by the 15 now evaporated enemies, 3 items dropped from the evaporation, and 3 ores.

There was no way we would be able to put carry this entire haul in the car. After wondering what we would be able to do with it all, I remembered the upgrade on my manual.

I had invested 98 ores into the manual upgrade option so far. If I just invested two of the ores that we just got today, I would have enough for the 100 ores required to do the upgrade.

“I’m going to go do something real quick and come back.”

\*\*\*

-Would you like to initiate manual upgrade?

\*\*\*

As soon as I nodded my head, millions of numbers started to rain down. It was very similar to when I had booted the manual for the first time.

It was like a green shower of numbers in the darkness. I waited in the midst of it all until the upgrade was complete.

\*\*\*

-80.....90.....99....100 percent. Upgrade complete. Changes have been applied.



-Item storage has been expanded to 100. In the case of similar items, you may store up to 99 of them in one slot.

-You may also store an additional skill for a total of two.

-You may perform Item Fusions within the manual

\*\*\*

“Ha....”

I had my mouth open without realizing it.

I had only been expecting to be able to add more items to storage. But I have an additional skill slot now? And all I did was invest 100 ores...

I tried to calm my fast beating heart to no avail.

There was no way I could remain calm.

“SunbehOppa. What are you doing over there by yourself?”

“Ah...”

“You’re not doing something perverted right? Everyone’s waiting for you. Hurry up and finish and come back.”

“You want to die?”

As soon as she showed up, I was finally able to regain some sort of control on my emotions. I guess she is useful at times.

As soon as I returned to the bonfire, everyone looked my way.

It seems they had tried to organize all the items into groups while I was gone.

But there was no one who knew the value of any of them.

Even if there were items here that were not rare or part of the new system, there was no one here who memorized them all as I have.

But....there were so many.

I simply regrouped the items and distributed them to whoever they were best suited for and put the rest into my manual.

As the many items started disappearing seemingly into thin air, they seemed to be surprised.

With this, it would be impossible for me to argue that I was storing them simply into a common transparent backpack. It was time to do some explaining.

# Chapter 60

---

“This is an ability of my skill. I am able to virtually save and store items.”

It was easier to explain it away in this way than to tell that it was an additional ability that came with the glasses and manual.

If I were to really get technical, it's not like they completely have nothing to do with one another so it wasn't a complete lie...right?

So I finished storing the items in that manner.

\*\*\*

- Escape (0) 5 sheets: Takes the user directly outside the dungeon
- Light Healing Potion (0) 5 bottles: Heals light wounds
- Ventilation Potion (0) 1 bottle: Resets the cooldown period
- Leather Agile Armor (2): Increases reaction rate by 30%
- Floodplain Cane (2): Can adjust range of attack. The wider the range, the lower the efficacy and vice versa.
- Ingot Sword (2): Increases equipment's durability by 100%

\*\*\*

“Damn...the Ventilation Potion is something.”

With that, I would be able to use Sooh's one person buff more than once in a day. It could really end up being useful one day.

“Other than this, we also have a Level 3 no name armor. We also have some no name level 2 items – if there is something that interests you – feel free to take them.”

“What's the point of 100% durability though? I thought items don't break.”

Cho Youngoo picked up the Ingot sword and asked as he looked at it.

“Just because something is an item doesn't mean it is indestructible. They do restore naturally with time but if it breaks during a fight, it would be difficult to restore...because what would you do without a weapon in the midst of a fight. In such a case, that sword is much more reliable than a no name.”

I finished distributing the items.

The level 3 armor that Ban Shihyung had been wearing came to me.

Cho Youngoo took the Ingot sword, the Floodplain Cane went to Manager Kim, and the Leather Agile Armor went to Jong Sawon.

And everyone else took the level 2 equipment.

Sooah decided to take and use both the level 1 Agile Sword and Level 2 no name sword.

This was because she couldn't let the increase reflex option that the agile sword provided go to waste.

Since she was plenty strong, it would be fine for her to fight holding a sword in either hand like I do.

It's also true that most higher level hunters lean toward using dual swords instead of just one because their skills and abilities allow them to do so.

Now that everyone had graduated from level 1 gear, excitement was etched all over their faces.

“To think we came up on this much in just one fight...I think I can kind of relate to those hunters that weasel talked about.”

Han Joonseok whispered.

The items we had left over after everyone taking what they

wanted was still valued at over 3 million dollars.

With that kind of money, we could buy two level 4 equipment.

All this...in just one day.

\*\*\*

A sleepless night came and passed.

I had raised all my abilities that night save for endurance – for a total use of 9000 points.

\*\*\*

Proficiency: 24

Reward Points: 230

Abilities: Strength 250? Endurance 300 Reflexes 250? Focus 200?  
Defense 200?

Upgrade: 1/1,000

\*\*\*

My next available upgrade required 1000 ores. I could think that it was a lot but, if we kept up the pace, I would be able to save that much in a month.

I couldn't even imagine what the next upgrade would bring.

“Sunbeh Oppa. Look at this.”

Sooah said while touching her smartphone.

“What?”

“It's some news about the Yellow Sea.”

\*\*\*

[Officials are in shock over news that there have been killings amongst hunters. Corpse count for just yesterday has been at over 100 and rising. It is estimated that there are over 200 dead. These unexpected events have set in motion the decision by the government to station a large number of police forces in the West Sea.]

\*\*\*

“Seeing this, it'll stop alot of people from coming.”

“This was probably what those hunters had been aiming for.”

Han Joonseok spoke up. Compared to dungeons, it was possible to make 10 times the amount on this land.

This would have easily convinced most hunters to venture here.

But this new piece of news could change everything.

“But wouldn’t it make more sense to just mobilize the army? I don’t think the police would be enough to regulate all the hunters...”

Cho Youngoo said. Hunters were vulnerable to firearms. Of course the police carried firearms as well but they were nothing compared to the army.

At the same time, it wasn’t that easy a solution.

“If they decide to mobilize the army, the Chinese will do the same. It’s better to send out the police instead – to at least keep the peace.”

“What a headache.”

“Well it’s not our problem. That’s the government’s headache to deal with. We just need to concern ourselves with hunting.”



Our main focus was not everyone else. It was to milk out as much as we could from this new land before things got too crazy.

We continued hunting for three days straight until we ran out of food, water, and fuel.

We were able to gather 250 ores and a total of 45 items in 4 days. Most of the investments were put into my upgrade. And after dividing up the items, we had about 31 unclaimed left.

I calculated the price of everything once sold to be somewhere around 4 million dollars.

Distribution contribution was split with me taking  $\frac{1}{3}$  and everyone else taking amounts according to their ranking.

Since I took all the ores, I wanted to do the split evenly with everyone ..but surprisingly Manager Kim pushed for me taking the larger split.

“If we don’t give this much to him, this bastard might just leave us. We need to give him as much money as we can so that the thought won’t even occur in his head.”

With those words, everyone nodded their heads.

I had no intention of breaking our party. I felt a kind of bond with everyone now.

“Where’s the trust?”

“Trust is empty. You need to back it up with money. Empty trust is easily shattered like glass.”

“Is that so...”

Is it because he’s had a lot of life experience? I felt a sort of wisdom in his words.

In any case, thanks to him, I was able to save 2 million dollars. Since there was now a Hunter’s Market at Manripo, there were no issues.

Everyone else took away 400,000 each. As soon as the money was deposited into their accounts, everyone’s face looked ready to rip from such wide smiles.

“Sunbeh Oppa. You want to get married with me? I’ll buy the house.”

...What the hell is this girl talking about?

We decided to take a day of rest so that the car could get maintained. Cho Youngoo went to the auto shop while Manager Kim and Han Joonseok went to rest at a hostel.

Jung Sooah, Bae Yeonkyoung, and I went out.

The number of hunters had increased much more than the first time we were here.

Even with the recent news, it seemed that everyone was dreaming of the riches to be earned instead.

“Why are we going to the market? Didn’t we sell everything we needed yesterday?”

“I was thinking of buying a skill.”

“What? Why? You’re going to throw away your effort skill? What a waste.”

“You crazy? Why would I throw that away?”

“Then ....?”

“I can learn one more...additional skill.”

“What??”

# Chapter 61

---

Both of them yelled out in surprise and stared at me with big Os for mouths.

Is it that surprising?

Well...if I thought about it...I guess it is.

“It happened somehow or another. Now that I have money, let’s go look for some decent skills to buy.”

“Is...is it all because of that effort skill you mentioned?”

Bae Yeonkyoung asked in awe.

I’d never noticed because she always had her hair tied up, but her long hair and white tee suited her.

And since she was well endowed in the front, she was drawing alot of looks from the men.

To think someone with a cute face would have such large...ahem.

It was almost enough where everyone seemed to do a slight double take.

I'm not the only pervert here. Good.

“Party head...?”

Shit. I was lost in my own perverted head for a second.

The market was crowded with a lot of people. Unlike a department store, they had containers lined in a row so you can only see from the outside like a Night Market.

I don't know if it's alright to sell items valued at over 100,000 dollars as if they were selling hot dogs.

It felt as if someone were selling luxury brands on the floor of a street market. No. That's almost exactly what they were doing.

“I think they sell skills over here.”

Yeonkyoung grabbed my sleeve and pulled me. I followed her to where they were selling skillbooks.

Honestly it seemed like there were much more people just browsing than interested in doing any real buying.

“Wow...just how many zeros are there?”

Sooah opened her mouth. She could probably catch some flies

like that. This place was selling skillbooks ranging from level 1 to level 5.

“Look, it’s a level 4 enchant. 1.2 million dollars.”

“Is that what I have?”

Yeonkyoung had a level 1 enchant. Of course if the difference in level is 1 and 4...the price difference should also be like the difference between heaven and hell.

“It’s the same category...but not the same.”

“Sunbeh oppa..what are you going to buy? Is there something you have in mind?”

“Ah. There is one thing. But I don’t know if I’ll be able to find it somewhere like this.”

I thought about what skill I should choose all night.

I first thought about what it was I needed the most. Ability-wise, I could always raise with my skill and Sooah’s buff...attack power...I had enough with the Honcheon sword.

Plus we still haven’t heard any news of high level monsters appearing in the West Sea yet.

It was just a theory but I thought that maybe all the level 1 and level 2 monsters that had disappeared with the dungeons were all transported here to this new land.

Kind of as if this land was a replacement for those dungeons. I don't know why something like that would happen but if this was true then I had no need for any real destructive attack power yet.

The kind of trash that would kill their own kind just for monetary gain...they could probably be much more dangerous than the monsters we would encounter here.

So I came to two options:

Level 4 skill 'Immortality' and Level 4 skill 'High Detection'.

With the immortality skill, if you were in a situation where your head were to be cut off or your heart pierced by something...it blocked it from happening.

But since it had a cooltime of one day, it could be seen as potentially having several lives.

This would seem like an amazing skill to have..but it isn't really.

Since most people only have one skillslot, what would be the point of having several lives if you're lacking in every aspect of combat that will be useful in saving your life or getting you through a raid.

But for people who have more than one skillslot like I do...this is something very worthwhile to have.

The High Detection skill allows you to detect the location and type of organisms in a large range of land.

The reason such a seemingly simple skill is high in level is because as you increase proficiency with the skill, the options that come along with it are extremely useful.

Example: Option, 'Force Alert', is an ability that wakes up the ability holder if a hostile being is in close vicinity.

Then if you completely master the skill, you can not only detect hostility but also love or like in your opponent. It is called the 'Eye of Truth'.

This is a skill very useful to people who are dating or in relationships.

Of course this particular option isn't something I need.

But if I had this skill, we wouldn't have any need for a night watch.

They were both great skills in their own way. The Immortality skill was good for just me...while the High Detection skill was great



for everyone inn the party.

I saw hotdogs stretched out before me.

So they do sell those here too.

As I bit into the hotdog that Sooah handed to me, I purchased the Immortality skill.

It wasn't a decision as much as that I couldn't find the other skill.

The skill was expensive. 1.2 million dollars.

“So you can survive by yourself?”

“I need to survive so you can survive too.”

“True.”

So we purchased the skillbook in that way and started to leave when we heard some whispers.

“What's so great about him that he has two girls...”

“The girls ain't half bad. And they're different styles too...”

“I like the big breasted one. She has a cute face and her body is whewww.”

“I like the tall one. Great style. And she has a pretty face on her.”

“Ha....should I go and talk to them? I have a good feeling.”

“With your face?”

“What’s wrong with my face? It’s manly you know?”

“Like hell. Retard. You’re ugly as hell.”

“Ah. Wait. I’ll go say something and come back.”

I could see why Yeonkyoung would be popular but I didn’t expect people to be into Sooah too.

I turned my head around and looked at her.

“Is there something on my face?”

“No. I just wanted to see if you had any pretty parts on your face.”

“Huh....SunbehOppa is finally interested in me....heuk.”

Sooah blinked out a tear. What.

\*\*\*

I read the skillbook and learned the Immortality skill.

It felt as if a hard marble formed somewhere in my body.

It was hard to pinpoint what exactly this felt like. It kind of felt like I was a bit more sturdy now.

Well...I can now say that I have a spare life.

With this, I can now fight a bit more freely.

And last, I raised my ability.

I had over 20,000 reward points. I was thinking about how I should use it when I decided to just go ahead and raise everything by one.

I used up 14,500 points and raised my proficiency to 29.

\*\*\*

Proficiency: 29

Reward Points: 5.730

Abilities: Strength 300, Endurance 350, Reflex 300, Focus 250, Defense 250

\*\*\*

Looks like I still have more than 5000 points left.

Do I need to hit 30 in proficiency?

If my original theory is correct, the level 3 dungeons might end up disappearing and then they might all appear here in the new land.

Just like the level 1 and 2 monsters probably did.

Since there were already a bunch of low level hunters here, I had not no desire to bring any higher level hunters here.

The more hunters come to this land, the less we would be able to profit off it. So that was a N.O. I'll wait.

\*\*\*

The next day, we packed up all our supplies and put it in our car and left Manripo.

I saw dirt spilling out of a large truck as a streamroller was moving behind it to create a makeshift road.

Because the lay of the land was pretty smooth to begin with, road construction looked fairly easy.

If the roads were completed, it would make travel safer for hunters.

“Why do you think the monsters aren’t heading towards the roads?”

Sooah, who had her head popped outside the car window, asked suddenly.

“I heard they don’t like the smell of asphalt from the roads.”

“But monsters appear in the cities too.”

“I said they don’t like the smell...not that they can’t bear it.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Just because you don’t like the smell of a bathroom doesn’t

mean you won't use it if you needed it right?"

Sooah raised her thumb up and smiled.

"You answered it perfectly so I could understand in one go!"

"Since there are still a lot of people here on the outskirts, I'll move closer toward the inner land."

Cho Youngoo said.

And we drove for a long time.

Weirdly, the number of hunters just didn't seem to decrease no matter how far we drove in.

"I don't think we'll be able to hunt properly like this."

"Let's go south..there should be roads easier to travel by car there."

Han Joonseok looked at my smartphone and said.

"What's that?"

"Ah...this is a map that the internet explorer drew out. You have to pay for it, but it's pretty accurate.

I knew this from my years of collecting data. I knew it would come in handy someday. This was a site that had more up to date and accurate maps than your usual web search maps.

“This land is already mapped out?”

“Someone’s got to pioneer this stuff. I’m sure they’re making a killing off of it too. They also keep record of monster species and count. If we want to avoid these monsters, we have to go further south.”

“Why do you want to avoid them? Isn’t it better for us to run into them?”

“Because everyone else will already know about them...there’s a high probability we might run into them. It’s better to go to a place with fewer people.”

“I guess.”

I took about an hour more for us to find a spot where we could hunt without seeing any other hunters.

“There’s a water spot near the canyon so we would be able to hunt here longer than somewhere else.”

“Uh? That....?”

Cho Youngoo, who had been driving, grasped his steering wheel a bit tighter and made a frown.

In the middle of the canyon, there were over a dozen vehicles blocking the road.

This was the only road that was accessible by cars... all other roads required offroad vehicles to travel.

And those cars were barricading this road.

“What’s that?”

Cho Youngoo slowed down as he muttered in annoyance.

In front of the barricade were a group of hunters waiting.

Squeaaaak.

We got out of the car and headed towards the barricade. There were some people protesting against the barricade.

“Why are you blocking the road like this? If we don’t hunt here we have to turn back again and drive for a long time!”

“Not my problem. This is Ezekiel’s Area. You can’t pass.”



“What...if we turn back...we have to drive for a real long way...”

“Oh well. If you want to pass, then pay a toll. Or else buzz off.”

“Shit. How much?”

“1000 per person. 10,000 per vehicle.”

“What? That makes so sense...”

“If you don’t like it, buzz off. You see this flag here? This mean it’s Ezekiel’s land.”

“The government said they would give rights to land but they never said they would allow you to charge for passage!”

“Go report us if you don’t like it.”

“How the hell are we supposed to report you from here...”

What the hell.

Manager Kim opened his mouth.

“Do we need to pass through here? We just need to hunt

monsters. Let's just turn around and hunt somewhere else."

"I think Manager Kim is right. I don't think there's any real need for us to pass through this way."

Cho Youngoo said as he nodded his head.

We turned our car around and changed directions.

"Again...?"

Cho Youngoo's face crumpled again.

The road was blocked.

This was the third time.

I turned on my smartphone and checked the map.

"This....It seems that all the roads in the South may be blocked."

"Then we can't go south anymore?"

Cho Youngoo asked.

"It'll be hard for us to do so by car. There is a road that isn't on

the map yet because the map isn't complete but that might be dangerous. If we're just hunting, it'll be to just leave the car and hunt on foot nearby."

"Leaving the car is a bit..."

Leaving a car in a place like this is almost the same as begging someone to just steal it.

We had to at least leave it closer to the city and move on foot.

"Whew...I guess we have no choice but to leave the car closer to the city."

# Chapter 62

---

We were currently about 60 kilometers away from Manripo.

Walking would take at best 10 hours – not an impossible distance, but not worth doing either.

We ultimately decided to leave the car in an area that was bare of all grass and trees. Why? Because monsters could be hiding anywhere. We didn't want to be surprised later when coming back to the car.

We decided that we wouldn't stray any further than 1 km away from the car and started on our hunt.

We didn't walk 50 meters when we came across a goblin. Goblins never travel alone so we started looking around for the rest of its group.

“I'll take care of this one.”

Han Joonseok raised his stalker. For a monster that we were already prepared for, just one stalker was all that was needed to take it down.

Ping!

The arrow that had flown over 50 meters, impeccably ripped into

the goblin's neck.

“Nice!”

Sooah raised up her thumb and made a pose. Of course this was basically due to the arrow's ability, but that's what a hunter is – someone raised up by the ability of items and equipment and skills.

We walked up to the fallen goblin's body and inspected it.

There was the arrow in its neck...but there was another arrow lodged in its back.

“Hm?”

We had only shot one arrow. Then where did the other one come from?

Brustle.

“Who is it!”

I drew my sword and swung my head to where the sound was coming from.

A male holding a longbow came out. He had a green headband on that had a feather of the same color attached to it.

It wasn't just any headband. It was a level 2 item that, using the mockingbird feather, camouflages the wearer with his/her's surroundings.

This kind of item could actually be even more useful than a lot of high level items.

If you didn't have a counter or another item, you were at their mercy. Because you wouldn't see them coming. Of course once your location is revealed...that's a different story.

He said.

"I had my eye on that monster first."

"But we were first to make the killshot."

"Well....agreed. I guess there isn't really a point in arguing over who killed it first. In exchange, can you lend me your ear for a moment?"

He did seem a bit suspicious but I didn't feel any evil intentions from him.

I scanned the area around us first. You couldn't be too careful – there might be more of his crew hiding around. And they could be hiding in plain sight if they also had the mockingbird feather

headband.

Luckily there weren't too many places to hide around this area.

The shrubs were too small to hide behind.

When I confirmed there really weren't any other people, I walked towards him.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes I am."

"Can you wait just a moment?"

I went back to my party.

Manager Kim spoke first.

"Who the hell is this guy?"

"It seems he's a solo hunter. He looks to be about a level 2 and I don't think he really has any ill intentions. It just seems he has something he wants to discuss with us."

"Is that so. It's not a bad idea to at least listen to what he has to say."

“He might ask to join our party too.”

Jun Sooah spoke up. That was a possibility. Especially since there weren't any party number restrictions like there were in the dungeons.

Other than contribution distributions, there wouldn't be any issues in adding more people to the party.

Additionally if we were short on profit, all we had to do was just hunt more monsters.

We decided to hear him out. After I invested the ores dropped from the monster into my manual, I went to the car with the archery guy.

“I'm Park Hanbum. You might have guessed but I'd like to join your party.”

He said. I already had an answer prepared for such a request.

“That would be difficult. Adding someone we cannot trust to the party is just asking to put our lives in danger.”

“Do I look like such a bad guy?”

“You can't judge a person just from their outside appearance.”



“That’s true...such a pity. Then I’ll see you again next time.”

He didn’t seem disingenuous. I grabbed him from leaving. I had some more questions for the guy.

“Just a moment. I’d like to ask you something.”

“...Yes?”

“How did you come to this place alone. You don’t seem to have a car...”

“I have a motorcycle way back there. I hid it from sight.”

“Then why are you hunting solo?”

“Ah...my skill is hunting while hidden so it works better alone rather than with parties. Thanks to that, I was able to pull in a good amount of money the past few days – I didn’t have to share any of it with another person. But I came to a realization. If I hunt alone, I run the risk of being robbed of monsters...and maybe even my equipment or life...by other teams. Do you know just how long I waited hidden out of sight so that I can kill that goblin?”

“Not really....?”

“Two hours. And that was taken away in the blink of an eye by

your team. And it's getting worse with the influx of hunters that are coming in daily."

"But another monster will appear if you just wait."

"That isn't true."

Park Hanbum shook his head.

For a moment, I didn't understand what he meant.

"You're saying they don't regenerate?"

"At least not in the places I was at."

"That's...a bit...odd isn't it?"

Usually, no matter how much you killed a monster again and again...they would appear again.

That was why fortresses were usually built in rural areas to keep them away.

Laying down asphalt was also something else we did to try and keep the ever regenerating monsters away.

"There's no record in history of something like that ever having

happened...”

“Well...this is a new land. Who knows what the laws of monsters are around here.”

Han Joonseok said. I guess that would be an easy answer.

But there needed to be a reason this was happening.

Let’s see.

First, the level 1 and 2 monsters that had disappeared with the monsters were probably transported over to this land.

So instead of this land being part of a new system, it was probably the byproduct of the old system.

But the old system had regenerating monsters.

There’s only one reason why the monsters were not regenerating here.

“Hm....”

“Have you thought of something?”

“No....this is merely speculation but...”

But it wasn't impossible. It was just...

"It might be that this new land is a dungeon in itself."

"But if it's a dungeon, then shouldn't dead people's items disappear?"

Han Joonseok made a good point.

"Yes. That's why it's all speculation. But this huge land that appeared out of nowhere. And the monsters that immediately appeared as well. If this isn't a dungeon, there is no other explanation."

"Hm....that's true too."

"Of course whether or not this is a dungeon isn't important. The important thing is that it will be hard for us to come by another monster."

"Then..."

"We need to move to a different location."

"But team Ezekiel is pretty much blocking all roads. I tried a bunch of times but they won't budge."

Park Hanbum said.

“Are you thinking of traveling on foot?”

Cho Youngoo spoke up. If we did that, we would have to throw away the car. It was probably not an appealing prospect for him.

“No.”

Manripo was now about 100 km to the north. It would be too much distance to cover without a car.

“We need to try and see if we can push through somewhere.”

“We’re only 8 even if we included Mr. Park Hanbum. And those guys will not stand by while we try to push through. It’s true that we’ve come this far with a bit of wrecklessness on your part, partyhead, but this is not something that will be resolved so easily.”

Han Joonseok said with a worried look on his face.

“So you’re saying they’ll fight back.”

“That’s the most likely reality.”

“What are your thoughts on taking on that risk?”

Han Joonseok scoffed at my question.

He knew what I was saying.

“....you want them to fight back.”

He said quietly.

It was a big problem if the monsters were disappearing without regenerating.

Hunters were coming in in droves.

We needed to do something to find new land and get to the dwindling number of monsters before they were all gone.

# Chapter 63

---

“Do you think...that the government knew things would turn out this way?”

Bae Yeonkyoung asked. This girl was sharp every once in a while.

“Could be. That might have been why they offered up partial ownership. I didn’t understand why they would make such a proposition but that might be why...”

“Then we could assume that other teams have made their moves just as team Ezekiel had.”

“Yes. It might be team Ezekiel in the south but if we go further somewhere else we might find mercenaries or some other pro teams.”

“Ultimately it looks like we just might end up serving honorary hunter roles without being able to do any real hunting.”

Cho Youngoo said with an annoyed look.

I felt the same annoyance.

We were a group of new hunters. Hunters who were not able to join any other teams.

But we had caught a glimpse of the riches this land that could have been ours.

Land of opportunity. The West Sea.

Where you could earn as much as the work you put in and rise up in levels quickly to become a real hunter.

But it was a silly pipe dream. We were naive.

I knew what had to be done now. We needed to build a team.

The hard part was convincing people.

Convincing them to put their lives on the line to fight against team Ezekiel.

Would there be anyone willing to do that and join our team?

Surprisingly, my problem was solved with the help of Manager Kim.

\*\*\*

Vrooom!

When I looked up, a number of buses, trucks, and cars drove up



behind our car. Clouds of smoke kicked up into the air.

It felt like the scene of a movie.

“Hm....what kind of magic did you do?”

“Hm? What? Me?”

Manager Kim wiped his brow as he answered. He then said as if it were no big deal.

“It wasn’t even that hard...something like this.”

“How did you get together so many people? It couldn’t have been easy. And it’s for something as crazy as fighting against team Ezekiel.”

Han Joonseok responded.

“Normally it would be difficult but this is a special case. Everyone came here with big hopes. There are also probably alot of people who were not able to hunt for a long time due to the disappearance of dungeons. I would assume that there are also a number of them who were having a hard time just surviving for want of money and food from the lack of dungeons. You just need to say the right things to them.”

“But I still don’t see how people would want to go through the

trouble.”

Cho Youngoo said.

He was looking around at all the vehicles gathered. It seemed he still couldn't believe they were all here.

“So I said we would take responsibility for them. I told them not to worry and follow us.”

“But that's a lie right?”

Jung Sooah said.

“Of course. You think that team Ezekiel will just peacefully let us through? I'm sure they'll try to kill every last one of us.”

“But will it be ok? What if they said something later?...”

“They just needed the right excuse to do something like this. They were just afraid to do something on their own. They don't really expect us to take care of them....they just needed us to give them that reassurance. Of course someone might say something later on. But if we were concerned about something like that, we shouldn't have tried something like this in the first place.”

“It feels like we're putting people in unnecessary danger...”

“Don’t worry. It’s my guess but I don’t think we’ll face too much backlash.”

“Do you have some kind of plan?”

I asked. Manager Kim gave a smirk and said.

“No. I just feel it in my bones.”

His words sounded kind of prophetic.

And it happened just in that way.

The closer we got to the road that team Ezekiel was blocking, the number of vehicles following us grew and grew.

Around the time we arrived to our destination, there were over a hundred cars behind us.

At this pace, we would get to the spot with over 200 cars.

How the hell did this happen?

Easy.

As soon as a group of 20 some vehicles moved together, the rest of the people who needed an excuse were converted just as

Manager Kim had said.

Would team Ezekiel be able to block all of us from passing?

Impossible.

“Now, I think it’s time for party head to say something.”

Manager Kim patted my shoulder. I nodded my head and got out of the car. Clouds of dust all around me...and I could hear the boom boom of running car engines behind me.

“Whoa.”

Sooah said as she looked out of the window.

One by one, people were getting out of their vehicles. Hundreds of them. And there were even more still in the vehicles.

As soon as I started toward the barricade, I could almost hear the members of team Ezekiel shaking in their boots.

Among them, one of their bows caught my eye.

Level 3 Grassland Horn Bow.

An item that raised shooting accuracy. Put simply, it allowed

someone to easily make a moving shot.

The owner of this bow was a man with a pretty big build. He was probably the boss here.

“You, you need to all go back or else...”

VROOOOM!

“Heeek?”

When it seemed awkward, all the vehicles behind me began to rev their engines.

The roar of engines only grew louder and louder.

My heart was starting race.

I was getting antsy.

I shook my shoulders up and down and said.

“Are you going to shoot me?”

“You, you think we’ll let you pass if you do this?”

“I’m just putting it out there but...I can’t stop those people from doing anything at this point. If I die here, they’ll storm this place... with you still standing here. What do you think will happen then?”

“Eu eu....”

Shake shake shake.

The hand that was drawing the arrow in the bow was shaking almost comically now. It was game over. They only had about a dozen men at the barricade while we had about a thousand behind us now.

“Shut up! Not even one of you will pass!”

Big guy yelled out as if to shake off his fear.

“Hey dumbbo. You think that any of us would come all the way here just to turn back quietly?”

“If you don’t want to die, back off!”

“Are you a parrot? Say something else why don’t you.”

Sling.

We were going to fight anyway. If we let it drag out and

government officials showed up, we would be in a pickle. We needed to get it over with.

“Eu....”

They had all drawn their bows.

“Shoot!”

Ping!

I stretched my arm out into the air.

Cho Youngoo’s shield appeared instantly in my hand and every single arrow bounced harmlessly off.

“Heuk? Where the hell did that come from?”

A few of them fell to the ground from the surprise of seeing me draw my shield from my storage.

“Leave your equipment on the ground and go. Then I’ll let you live.”

“This, this nobody bastard...?”

“Who’s calling who a nobody bastard?”

I raised my hand to signal.

Sling!

“Heuk?”

An arrow flew out from our car and hit its mark. Han Joonseok’s stalker.



# Chapter 64

---

Seeing the arrow lodged just a hairwidth's distance from his head, the big guy started to sweat as he slowly backed away. Then he made a mad dash for a car that had been on standby.

“Everyone run! Shit!”

But I couldn't let them get away like that.

I hit the ground hard and sprinted.

It didn't matter how fast he ran.

My focus was at 250.

My reflexes at 300.

Instant acceleration and speed...I had already surpassed that of a normal human beings' ability in these areas long ago.

Slam.

“Heuk?”

I instantly ran in front of them all and cut them off from their vehicles. I still held the shield in my left hand and the Honcheon

sword in my right. I lowered my stance in battle position.

“Shit! Shit! Kill him!”

Five of them, with their swords drawn, ran toward me. Even the archers pulled their swords free. Arrows were no use in close combat.

But with my back to the vehicle, only two of them could attack me at one time.

Slam!

“Ahk?”

Slam!”

“Ahhk!”

I slammed my shield against one opponent’s sword to knock him off balance while I used the explosive attack of my Honcheon sword against another.

As the man flew back from the small explosion, his weapon shattered into smithereens and hit him all over. Hm. That could kill him if he didn’t get it looked at.

Even though I had retired two of them in mere seconds, it seemed to only kindle the fire in the rest of them.

Because they had over 1,000 to deal with behind them.

They probably felt that if they didn't get rid of me and run away, they'd be goners for sure – there would be a mob lynching.

But their equipment levels were only 1 and 2s.

I was careful to keep an eye on the guy with the level 3 bow while I dropped each of them one by one.

This was too easy. The thought came to me that I would probably be able to fight against them even if I were barehanded.

Even those that had level 2 items, at most they would raise their abilities by 30 percent.

Compared to that, I had almost a 300 buff on all my abilities.

And I also had Sooah's buff on top of that.

Even if I were to go against 30 of these guys, they would not be able to beat me.

“Crap! What the hell is this!”

Big guy started to yell out in frustration. Bro. I feel you. It must be frustrating that you can't get through just one guy like me.

I blocked an attack to my shoulder with the shield and stabbed back.

“Ahhk!”

He probably thought I would only block because he was knocked back completely.

He was so shocked by the attack that he looked as if he would drop his sword any second.

And then he did.

I rolled on the ground, picked up the sword, and immediately put it in my manual's storage.

The guy who dropped his sword dumbly started to look around for his weapon.

“My...my sword?”

To think he was looking around for his sword when I was right in front of him.

Well...it was a 200,000 dollar item. I'd look for it too.

Slam!

I smacked him with my shield to knock him out. Goodnight.

Two men on either side of the now unconscious guy ran at me.

I swiped my Honcheon sword horizontally.

Slam! Slam!

Each explosive hit from my sword violently smacked my opponents' weapons into the air. But since they were level 2 items, they didn't shatter from the impact.

I jumped up, grabbed both swords, and stored them in my manual as I landed back to the ground.

"What, what the hell?"

"Is this a spell or magic?"

Magic my ass.

Just then, Manager Kim cast his sleep spell over the enemies' heads.

As soon as the golden light cascaded down, 3 of them fell unconscious in a heap.

Out of the 5 who had not fallen asleep, only 3 still had their weapons.

“Die!”

Shwing!

Big guy shot out his arrow, and it flew at me fast. But I slightly moved my body at an angle so it would graze my armor and bounce off harmlessly.

“What the hell! That makes no sense! This is a level 3 bow!”

Big guy started stomping around and yelling. He looked like he would have a heart attack any second now. I'm sorry but my armor's level 3 too. There's no way that it would cause any damage especially just from glancing off my armor at an angle.

“Party head!”

“Sorry we're late.”

Cho Youngoo and Jong Sawon ran to my side. It wasn't that they were late, I was just too quick.

"I'm here too."

Park Hanbum. And behind him, 20 some other hunters had followed past the barricade.

No, there were more.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap Tap.

Hunters kept climbing over the barricade in great numbers.

"Uh...?"

"Shi, shit. What the hell...?"

"Are you guys asking to die! GO BACK BEHIND THE BARRICADE!"

Big guy kept yelling and yelling. Jeez.

But the men who had climbed over the barricades were only more emboldened and walked ever closer.

"Pieces of shits. Selfish pieces of shits."

“I’ve always wanted to choke the life out of you Ezekiel bastards.”

“Yeh, you guys have been a menace for too long.”

Hm. Guess no one was a fan of these guys.

I put the shield and sword back into storage.

I had half a mind to just leave them to the mob to deal with, but I had something I needed to do.

The bow big guy had in his possession was worth 800,000 dollars.

Might as well take that right?

I cracked my neck to one side before I pushed everyone back.

“What, what...?”

I outstretched an open palm to him.

“Heuk?”



He swung at me with his bow like a sword.

Tap.

I grabbed it with my hands.

“Shit!”

“If you hand over your weapon, I’ll let you leave with your life.”

“Shut the hell up!”

“Hm. Why are you being stubborn when I’m giving you the chance to live.”

“Keuk.”

We started to wrestle with the bow.

The bow began to bend under the strain.

Surely it won’t ...break right? I mean...it’s a level 3 item.

“Keuk. To think you’d try and wrestle with me.”

“You think I look that weak?”

His arm began to shake. Looked like he was putting his all into it.

But I didn't give even an inch.

“What were you saying?”

“This....baaastarddd!”

He yelled out on the top of his lungs and pulled on the bow even harder.

He was pulling on the bow as if his life depended on it, but I still didn't budge.

Then I let one of my hands go.

“...?”

I was holding it with one hand now, while he was using both arms to pull with all his might.

But he was still unable to wrestle the bow away from me.

Not only was his face a bright red, but his whole body had turned that alarming shade. It looked like his eyes would pop right out of his sockets any second now.

“Hey hey. You might just take a shit if you keep at it.”

“I’m going to kill you!”

“Hm...And here I was trying to give you an out.”

I pulled the bow. Hard.

And he was jolted toward me.

“Huh?”

As soon as his face came right in front of mine, I socked him a good one with my free fist.

“Keuk!”

I heard something snap as he dropped to his knees and threw up everything in his stomach.

Everyone around us started to cheer like crazy.

And amidst all of happy roars, I took the bow and put it in my manual.

After taking what I came for, I slipped out of the large crowd.

They started to take every member of team Ezekiel and tied them all up onto the vehicles that were forming the barricade.

I was half surprised and relieved they didn't kill the lot of them.

“Hm...it's a shame we couldn't take their weapons.”

Han Joonseok muttered. Little did he know, I was the one who had taken almost every single one of them and put them into my manual.

Jung Sooah came up to me and hit me lightly on the back.

“You should have said something instead of just running ahead like that. We were all surprised.”

“Ah, I just saw an opportunity and went for it. And I thought everything would fall apart and everyone behind us would leave if we didn't make the first move. I needed to show them that team Ezekiel wasn't all that tough so that they wouldn't be afraid to cross over the barricade.”

The entire crowd of some thousand people were looking my way.

We were able to overcome this small team but it was a different story if reinforcements came.

Depending on whether or not they stick with me at that time... the tide could go either way.

“Even if reinforcements were to come and attack, if we just hold our ground and refuse to turn away, they would have no choice to give up. Too many casualties would cause the government to step in...and no one on either side wanted that to happen.”

“You were thinking that far ahead? That’s our party head.”

Cho Youngoo said as he gave me a thumbs up sign.

We started to move the barricade made up of vehicles.

It wasn’t hard – all we had to do was release the side brake and push.

“Go!”

I motioned for everyone to pass.

I don’t know how it happened, but there were now almost 300 cars waiting behind us – and almost 2000 hunters.

There was no way anyone could chase us all away.

“Thank you. It’s thanks to you we can now try to make some kind of living.”

“Hwaaa!”

“You’re amazing!”

The hunters driving past in their cars kept yelling out to us. It was getting a bit embarrassing.

“Sunbeh Oppa, it looks like you might get really famous now!”

It was a great opportunity for hunters to become famous.

Because fame always came hand in hand with money.

This could help to catapult team Delta into being a real pro hunter team.

But I didn’t want to get my hopes up just yet.

After letting all the other hunters go first, it was our turn.

I double checked all the items I had taken.

8 Level 2 items, 10 Level 1 items, and 1 Level 3 item.

That translated into roughly 3.5 million dollars.

Among my haul, the Grassland Horn Bow was a really useful item. It was much better to give to Bae Yeonkyoung or Han Joonseokk to use than to sell.

I brought out the bow from my manual.

“Uh? What is that?”

Sooah asked.

“Level 3 Grassland Horn Bow. You can accurately shoot at something while moving with this.”

I looked at Bae Yeonkyoung and Han Joonseok.

Both of them were equipped with level 2 items.

It was a bit of a shame that neither of them were a match with the bow's extra option.

“Hm....Don't you think that the bow will be a better fit for Ms. Bae Yeonkyoung? Since I have the stalker....”

“I think that I am not qualified to use a Level 3 bow just yet. I

think it would be better for Joonseok oppa to use it.”

Jesus. They were now doing a polite fight of who should take a level 3 item.

As a hunter, I’m sure they both secretly coveted the bow.

But they were also putting the needs of the team over their own selfish desires. I really like my team.



# Chapter 65

---

It may have been just a little bit at a time, but I could feel us trusting one another more and more each day.

“Hm...what to do...?”

“I’ll buy it.”

Park Hanbum raised his hand and spoke up.

“Do you know how much something like this is?”

“I don’t know how much it is, but I’ll buy it for 1 million dollars.”

I started laughing at Park Hanbum’s response.

There was no need to pay 1 million for something worth only 800,000. Because then he could just go and buy it at the market instead.

There was only one reason for this offer.

“But how about I pay 800,000 in cash and 200,000 in future distribution?”

“That’s sure a roundabout way of asking to put you in our team.”

“It seemed you wouldn’t let me in otherwise.”

“Do you have that kind of money?”

“I think I can scrape up that much from the money I’ve saved up.”

“If you have a level 3 weapon, I’m sure that there will be plenty of other teams who would welcome you with open arms. What’s the real reason you’re trying to include yourself in our team at the expense of 200,000 dollars...?”

“There aren’t many people you can meet in this neck of the woods.”

I thought he would say something more along the lines of higher pay probability or because we had better skills.

But to say we were trustworthy...

It was an answer I honestly liked.

I turned around and looked at my party members.

“How do the rest of you feel about this offer?”

Everyone agreed and accepted Park Hanbum to our party.

A thought came to my head that maybe I should draft a contract or something.

“Since we even have a team name now, I think it would be a good idea to create a formal contract.”

“Just leave that to us.”

Han Joonseok raised his hand and said.

“Do you have experience making something like this?”

“He worked as a planner so he’ll do just fine.”

Cho Youngoo said while pointing to Joonseok.

“Planner? What kind of planner?”

“In the hunter management area. It wasn’t long but I’m familiar with the gist of contracts so you don’t have to worry too much.”

I think I mentioned this before but hunters had the ability to earn a very nice income besides what they could make from ores and items.

Popular and famous hunters could earn money from advertising, appearances, sponsorships, and a bunch of other ways.

And all of this was handled by hunter management.

“Everything else could be drafted according to a general contract. The more difficult part is the distributions. But we can put in a clause that says the party head can make changes to distributions of needed. “

Distributions was always a point of contention with all teams.

There are two sides to distributions. Keeping more for the team and distributing less to the members helped overall team growth but keeping less for the team and distributing more to each individual member helped personal growth.

I preferred going the route of personal growth.

Just because the team's finances increased didn't mean that the team's overall power would increase. All it would do is attract more hunters.

You could say this was how team Ezekiel worked.

“Let's get started on the formal contract when we get back after finishing this round of hunting.”

“So we’re on our way to becoming a real raid team...it feels weird. This wasn’t something I even dreamed of happening.”

Bae Yeonkyoung said.

She had been just a level 1 archer – and a crappy one at that – so I wasn’t surprised this was far and apart from where she expected to be.

“That kind of stuff isn’t important. Just because we create an official raid team and name doesn’t mean we’re anything if our skills and abilities are not up to par.”

“Yes! We’ll make sure to work hard so as not to drag you down!”

Sooah yelled out as she waved her sword back and forth.

“Now, let’s get going.”

“I’ll follow close behind while riding this.”

“You won’t get too tired?”

“Just because I’ll get tired doesn’t mean I can just throw it away. This thing’s pretty expensive.”

Tap tap.

Park Hanbum lightly tapped his offroad bike. I put my hand to the bike. I wondered if I could store this thing in my manual too.

-No information on item.

I guess not. It seemed that only items could be stored in the manual.

The Marsh in the South was a vast land stretching out for over 100 kilometers.

It should have been big enough to accommodate a few thousand hunting parties.

Of course, without regeneration, the monsters here will soon dry up too.

So before that happens, we had to hurry up and hunt what we could.

We followed a particularly better looking road in our car, and Park Hanbum followed us close behind.

We could already see cars that had stopped so parties could begin their hunting. As I looked through my explorer map, Han Joonseok said.

“It says that there are more Level 2 monsters in this area so we best be more careful.”

“Whether it’s level 1 or level 2 monsters, they’re pretty much the same.”

Manager Kim replied.

Currently, Cho Youngoo, Jong Sawon, Park Hanbum, and I had level 3 equipment.

Of course Cho Youngoo’s weapon was still a level 2 but he could safely cover our rear with that.

It was understandable why Manager Kim was being so laissez faire about everything.

“We still need to be careful. Because it’s from this point that we might cross paths with monsters like that toad. If they just jump, they could easily move from our front to the side or back.”

“You have me for that.”

Sooah took out her sword and started posing wildly.

I shook my head.

I couldn't deny it, however, that she did improve her swordsmanship in a short time.

You didn't need to be an amazing swordsman to fight against a low level monster.

All you needed to take care of yourself was the basic slash and stab – and she had that down.

We kept on the road in this same manner until we saw a new scene unfolding.

There were dozens of people who had gotten off heavy trucks fighting against another group of dozen.

When I rolled down the window to listen in, it seemed some of them were from team Ezekiel.

It seemed they had tried to block the sudden onslaught of people coming into the new land, but were not too successful.

“What? Huh? Say it again!”

“This place is team Ezekiel's land....keuk?”

The moment he grasped his opponent's neck with one large hand, team Ezekiel's hunter was immediately lifted off the ground.



“Are you kidding? Who says? Do you see just how many people we have? We can take you on!”

“Keuk....ah, what I meant was...”

“Move that hand immediately!”

Shwing!

As soon as the men on team Ezekiel's side drew their sword, everyone on the other side did the same.

Things were getting a bit...dangerous again.

“It looks like it's about to get real.”

Sooah mumbled. I agreed. Even if it was the West Sea, killing people in broad daylight in front of witnesses was asking for trouble.

Squeak.

We slowed our car and got out to approach them.

It felt as if blood would be spilled if one person on either side moved an inch.

# Chapter 66

---

“Stop over there. Just stop.”

As soon as I spoke, everyone looked at me.

“Huh? Aren’t you Jeon Sangmin?”

“Eum....how did you know my name...?”

“How could we not? Weren’t you the one who allowed all of us to pass through that barricade?”

“I guess but...”

It seemed my name was becoming quite famous. But that also meant I was infamous now to team Ezekiel.

It didn’t matter. Fame had a tendency to bring in negative attention as well as positive. I could handle that much at least.

It wouldn’t have been possible to pierce through the barricade all on our own. At least bringing everyone else over allowed us to not only come through easily but also have a whole slew of people as a sort of ally.

“Anyway, there’s no point in causing unnecessary trouble here. It’s better to just not fight and step away. Same with you guys from

Ezekiel.”

I looked pointedly at the other guys.

“What are you saying! This is our land! We even got confirmation from the government!”

“Shut up. Isn’t that only after you’ve cleared the entire land of monsters? It makes no sense for you to claim the land like this when we see monsters crawling all over it.”

“I love that way you put it. You’re 100% correct.”

He said as he clapped me on the back. Ezekiel’s side was now grinding their teeth, but I paid them no mind.

They were the minority right now and, short of losing their mind, they wouldn’t try and fight now.

“Don’t pick any fights and just focus on hunting. That would be the smartest move right now.”

“No. Was it us who picked the fight first? They were the ones who blocked our way first. We had half a mind to just push past them forcefully with our trucks before deciding to try and settle it out peacefully by getting out and trying to talk.”

The person who looked to be the party leader explained.

“We.....we!”

“Don’t make me say the same thing twice and just leave. If you don’t want to die, that is.”

“Keuk...”

I spoke a bit more roughly than I meant to.

Was this because of my memories from the Baeksapyoung Dungeon? The faces of all the unnecessarily slaughtered men and the melted faces of the survivors came to mind.

Finally the Ezekiel group moved aside. That was their only option.

The truck party’s leader came toward me and said.

“I had wanted to use some force against them but I will let it be only because of you. Then...until we meet again.”

All of them loaded back into the truck and disappeared into the horizon.

And then the Ezekiel group looked to me and said.

“You said you’re Jeon Sangmin...? You were the cause of all of this?”

“Whatever. Watch yourself. From now on, there will be plenty of other people not as forgiving as them.”

I turned around after saying my piece.

It would have been nice if they just left it at that.

“Stop!”

“What?”

“You didn’t think we would just let you go after you did all this shit?”

“No. I just saved you guys from getting killed, so what the hell are you talking about?”

“Save us? Like hell! You’re looking down on us!”

“Looking down on you? If that means saving your life...then yeh...I’m looking down on you.”

“What?!”

“Oh. I’m sorry if my speech is a bit rough, but I’m not wrong.”

“This bastard! Just know today is your funeral.”

Shwing.

The sword he had sheathed just a moment ago was drawn again.

I made a sigh and said.

“Don’t do this...really.”

“I will make you regret letting those guys pass.”

“It’s nice that you have so much confidence but...think of it from the other side. Why do you think they left us like that?”

“Party head!”

The doors to our car opened and both Han Joonseok and Jong Sawon got out. When everyone else looked ready to get out too, I raised my hand to stop them.

“Just wait on stand by. I’m enough to handle these guys by myself.”

“Nice bluff...I’ll give you that much.”

The biggest of them all, wielding a Bastard Sword, stomped his way toward me.

Glancing at his equipment, he had level 2 equipment and a level 3 sword.

Hm. Not bad.

But even if he had a level 3 skill, he was still no match for my effort skill.

“Keu keu. I will make you rue the moment you had your friends stay back.”

“Sorry. What did you say?”

“Heuk?”

I piledrived right into his chest in a split second.

Squeeze.

The moment I gave a good hard squeeze to the hand holding the sword, he released his weapon and let it fall to the ground.

“Heuuuuk?”

The moment he stepped back in surprise, I stepped on the sword and put it into storage.

“This bastard! Doing a surprise attack!”

“Whatever. Just go. I don’t want to fight.”

“Wait...where’s my sword?”

“What are you talking about? What sword?”

“The sword you just took...”

I raised up both hands to show that I had nothing in them. His face froze. Even a non name level 3 sword sold for about 600,000 dollars.

He must have felt like crying from losing something like that.

“Wait...wait....really...my sword.”

“Stop whining. If you want to fight then just hurry it up.”

Pft.



I could hear Sooah trying to stop from laughing behind me.

His face kept getting redder and redder.

“Shit! I’m sure it’ll turn up somewhere. Everyone attack!”

He yelled confidently, but no one behind him moved.

Unless they were idiots, they would have been able to assess our power.

It should have struck them as odd that a bunch of hunters left just on my word alone.

It meant that they acknowledged my power enough that they would not only listen to me, but trust that I would be safe even after they left.

Only this one idiot didn’t understand all of this.

“What are you guys doing! I said to kill the bastard!”

“I mean...he looks pretty strong. And it’s not like we have to fight him. I’m sure someone higher up will do something about him.”

Everyone started to walk away.

Only the guy who had his weapon stolen was still mad. But he couldn't fight alone...and weaponless at that...so he followed everyone else.

“Shit! You just watch!”

“So there are idiots who say cliché things like that.”

“Keeeeeuek!!!!”

He let out a final frustrated yell at my nonchalant words before running at me.

It wasn't hard to fight off a foe who didn't even have a weapon.

Slam!

I punched him in the face.

“You use this.”

I passed the level 3 no name sword to Sooah.

“Are you just passing things out now?”

“Return what you had instead.”

“Ok.”

She passed back the level 2 sword she had strapped to her hip.

After scattering team Ezekiel, we made a small change in course. There was no need to unnecessarily go on a course they knew so that they could find us again to fight.

Our aim was to fight monsters...not people.

Of course the items we gained from fighting people were very very nice, but not enough to kill.

We arrived at a piece of land that didn't overlap with any other parties' hunting grounds.

Park Hanbum spoke.

“How many do you think we can kill?”

“If they're level 2 monsters, I'm sure we can easily do about 20 at one time?”

Armed with level 3 equipment now, we were far stronger than we had been at the Baeksapyoung dungeons.

But it was better not to overwhelm ourselves since we were fighting on a more open landscape.

“Then I’ll be right back.”

Vroom!

# Chapter 67

---

Park Hanbum revved his bike and sped away.

After a few moments,

Vroooooom!

We heard his bike again and saw close to 25 monsters chasing after him.

What was interesting was that he was riding his bike in large arcs instead of driving straight.

“...what the hell is he doing?”

“I think....he’s testing out his new item.”

Han Joonseok responded as he slitted his eyes to try and look closer. It seemed he was able to assess the situation better thanks to the Optical Ruby ring allowing him better vision.

When Park Hanbum got a bit closer, we were finally able to see what was going on.

He was shooting his bow while speeding on his bike at the same time. Since he had both hands off the handles every time he shot his bow, the bike would swerve here and there.

“What the...is that even possible...?”

On a road that wasn't even asphalt...and one that was a bit wet at that...he was using sheer hip movements to stabilize his bike.

“I can see why he wanted that bow.”

Han Joonseok added. Just being able to ride a bike like that could be as helpful as having a skill. No, it might actually be due to the aid of a skill that he's able to ride like that.

“Get ready for battle.”

Struck momentarily by Park Hanbum's riding skills, the monsters had drawn every closer in mere moments.

And in that time, the monsters had gone from 25 to 23.

We were already in position.

Jong Sawon, Cho Youngoo, and I were in a triangle as the ranged damage dealers (ADC).

It was Sooah's job to back us up.

Vroom!

The bike sped roared as it sped past me. I could hear the wheels grinding against the ground.

Paht!

Park Hanbum shot out an arrow and another monster fell to the ground.

That was a level 3 item for you – the damage it inflicted was no laughing matter.

Our opponents consisted of 10 Predatory Toads, 6 Striped Alligators, and 6 Fanged Earwigs. 22 in total.

Seeing a standing target, they switched their attention to me and started running in my direction.

Shwing.

Honcheon sword in my right, Level 2 no name in my left hand.

And I had been wearing my armor for a while now.

Squeeze.

Squeezing my swords in both hands, I made a dash towards them.

Jong Sawon and Cho Youngoo followed suit and ran forward as well.

Manager Kim started to cast his spell while Han Joonseok, Bae Yeonkyoung, and Park Hanbum readied their bows.

Quickly reaching the monsters, I struck out with my sword horizontally. No matter how sharp the blade is on a sword, it is hard to kill a large monster with one swipe.

The key was to attack their weak spot.

Flap.

One predatory toad struck out its tongue in my direction. I could see the poison dripping off its thick tongue as it came ever closer.

Swipe!

Flap!

As soon as I cut it off, almost three more struck at me.

Too slow.

Swipe! Slash! Slash!



Even before they can feel the pain of my blade, I stepped atop the first toad's head.

“Croak?”

Stab!

I struck down with my Honcheon sword straight into its head.

[+200]

I jumped off the now dead toad towards my next monster.

The predatory toad I had aimed for raised its head and opened its mouth.

Huge.

It could easily swallow me whole.

“Haaahhht!”

I yelled out and swiped my Honcheon sword straight up and down.

The large gaping mouth split into two and transparent fluid splattered everywhere.

But even with its mouth split apart, the toad remained its mouth open.

And I fell right into its throat.

Shit.

Splat.

The sticky saliva clung all over my body. It smelled putrid.

“Sunbeh Oppa!”

I could hear Sooah yelling out.

The toad's esophagus started to pull my body in. If I just stayed still, I might get digested.

I hurriedly stored all my weapons into storage and brought out the bloody sword.

This might hurt a bit.

Shwing!

“Crooak!”

The toad started to jump about after I cut it.

Now I could feel what was left of its tongue pushing at me and its muscles trying ever harder to digest me.

I tried in earnest to stab at its throat. Luckily I was able to do this much since its tongue was already gone – meaning I wasn’t paralyzed.

Stab! Stab!

“Just die! Die why don’t you!”

Staab!

Unable to take any more, it finally spit me back out.

“Croak! Croak!”

The monster started croaking and coughing as if it had something stuck in its throat. I’m sure it wasn’t feeling 100% since I had left my bloody sword stuck in its throat before being spit back out.

Ah, my clothes were covered in the toads juices, and I was unbearable smelly and sticky.

I did bring a change of clothes but there was nowhere for me to shower. I guess I would need to look for some running water after this fight was over.

“Party head!”

Han Joonseok yelled out. Another toad jumped to where I was standing.

I hurriedly hopped back.

Slam!

The ground shook at the impact of the large monster.

I equipped myself with a sword in either hand again.

Tap.

I hit the ground running. The nasty toad revealed its little stub of a tongue as it raised its forelegs.

Unlike normal toads, these toads had incredibly large feet.

Slam!

“Euk.”

I dodged its attack and ran to its side.

Swipe!

I struck at its hip and all its intestines spilled out of the gaping hole.

Ah, are those eggs over there? Looks like this one is female.

Slam! Slam!

It started to jump after me...even with its intestines and eggs trailing after it.

[+200]

Reward points..where did that come from?

Looking up, I saw that the toad that had swallowed me whole had finally collapsed.

It seemed as if my bloodysword had finally done its work and drank all its blood.

“Croak!”

During the short time I was preoccupied by that toad, the zombie toad had closed the distance.

Shwing!

An arrow had lodged itself in the toad’s forehead. It flinched, but the damage wasn’t enough to kill it.

But more arrows flew out...and one of them hit its eye.

“Croak!”

It let out another croak and started to flail its body.

And then I jumped atop the miserable toad to jam my Honcheon sword straight down.

[+200]

After ridding of three toads in that way and looking around, I saw Jong Sawon and Cho Youngoo engaged in a bloody fight against the Striped Alligators.

There were 6 dead toads.

The remaining 4 toads were fast asleep.

The striped alligators were much easier to deal with than the Predatory Toads.

The striped alligators were only fearsome when they were hidden in shallow streams – when they were exposed above ground like they were now...all you had to do was avoid getting bitten.

Cho Youngoo raised his shield and blocked the attacks of the 3 meter long Stiped Alligators.

Jong Sawon parried attacks at my right.

They couldn't do reckless close combat fighting like I could do.

I was only able to do such attacks because of the high level abilities...thanks to my effort skill.

Because even if they were level 3 hunters, if they got caught in the level 2 toad's mouths...they would not be able to get back out.

Most humans fought while depending on their weapons and equipment...and not relying on their physical abilities. The same went for dealing with the alligators. I was just the exception.

Humans could not move as quickly as the monsters' jaws could.

One wrong move, and they could lose an arm or leg to the alligators' mouths.



# Chapter 68

---

Of course if you have the right combination of equipment, then the buffs from those items could probably be enough to boost your physical abilities enough to fight the alligator easily.

In the case of the alligator, the best buffs would probably be ones that boosted reaction time.

Anyway, my point was this.

That I would be the only bastard crazy enough to do this using just physical ability.

I charged at one of the three alligators that was next to Jong Sawon.

Since Cho Youngoo had his shield, he would be able to hold up for longer than Jong Sawon.

The monster raised its ugly head and opened its jaws wide.

Close your damn mouth.

Slam!

I slammed its jaws back together again.

Alligators typically have very strong clamping strength.

As opposed to that, they are very weak in opening their mouths so a human could easily keep them closed if they wanted.

This was the same for the Level 2 Striped Alligators. Unable to use its main weapon,, the monster started to whip its body back and forth to try and get free.

There wasn't any point in dragging it out.

I stepped on its jaws to keep it closed while I draw my sword and plunged it straight into its forehead.

The Honcheon sword made a small explosion upon impact.

Alligator brains.

[+200]

“Nice! Shot! Sunbeh Oppa!”

Slam!

[+200]

Slam!

[+200]

Instead of stopping, I kept the momentum up and cut off the heads of the remaining two monsters. All organisms are the same.

If you just cut off the head, even a dragon would end up dying.

Ah...the undead don't count. Because they aren't living to start with.

Just then, I barely evaded a Fanged Earwig that had aimed to pounce on me.

It seemed in every other way like a regular Earwig except it had huge fangs that looked like ivory elephants' tusks.

Jong Sawon swung wide with his Rubicon Sword.

It cut through the air in a half arc.

Shwing!

The 2 meter tall Earwig was instantly split cleanly in half.

I had to admit. The Jong Sawon armed with the Rubicon Sword was far and away stronger than the man I had first met.

As soon as I went to stand next to Jong Sawon, all three archers

naturally switched focus to cover Cho Youngoo.

Cho Youngoo gave up on attacking and switched to defense mode.

Because he knew that the monsters would not be able to get through.

[+200]

Jong Sawon and I teamed up to get rid of the rest of the Earwigs.

All we had left were the 3 Striped Alligators futilely trying to pierce through Cho Youngoo's shield.

As I ran towards him, I counted the monsters we killed.

3 Predatory Toads, 3 Striped Alligators, and 6 Fanged Earwigs. If we counted the 4 Sleeping Predatory Toads and 3 Alligators still alive and well, it brought our total monsters to 22.

We were almost done.

Slam! Slam! Slam!

[+200]

Just when we killed the three alligators.

Pow!

All at once, 4 Fanged Earwigs burst through the ground from my rear.

I could see Sooah standing in frozen horror with wide eyes in front of the monsters.

Shit.

There were four more of them???

I thought there were only 22 to start with?

“Keuk!”

Stomp!

I stomped on the ground hard enough to kick up a small cloud of dust. I don't even know if Sooah would be able to handle one of them.

Let alone four.

Flash!

I saw Jong Sawon's sword shining from here.

Just when did he get there?

“Haaht!”

Shwing!

And I saw Sooah slash horizontally with her own sword. The Earwig that had been aiming to rip her to shreds with its sharp teeth was immediately cut in half – spewing out white guts everywhere.

Jong Sawon swung out with his sword while the three archers shot out with their bows to keep the monsters at bay.

“Hap!”

Stab!

Her sword swung once more in the air and the Earwig’s fang flew majestically as it separated from the monster’s head.

“Wow....”

Cho Youngoo said with amazement.

The five minute battle had garnered us 26 dead monsters. And

Sooah had personally killed 2 of them herself.

I was the one who had trained her and shown her how to fight.

But I never imagined she would be able to follow through so well in real battle.

I had assumed she would need more time before fighting for real.

“Isn’t this your first time fighting a monster?”

“I don’t think it is.”

“Not counting the roach you killed that one time.”

“Eum...then it’s my first time.”

“And you were still able to stay calm and fight like that?”

“I practiced hard.”

“Ah.....still....”

If that was all it took to be able to do what she did, I wouldn’t have been as surprised as I was.

There are people who are earnest. On the outside, they complain and don't look like they're trying all too hard, but they are the type of people who actually work a lot harder than anyone else. This was because they don't like to show their hard work to others. They find it embarrassing. I felt like this girl was that type.

What was hard for me to believe though was that she thought to fight in such a surprising situation. It was a situation where she would not have been mentally prepared since the attack came out of nowhere.

I can't say that I would have 100% responded in the same way were I in her position.

If I had to guess, I would say that she was able to respond in that way because she had faced life and death situations a numbers of times in her life.

“Did I do well?”

She made a small smirk while oogling at me.

Hmph. I wouldn't go that far. I'd say that she just finally earned her keep today.

But still.

“You did well. Good job.”



“ ... ”

She put her head down. And her shoulders started to shake.

What the...is she so happy it's making her cry?

I tap tapped her shoulder.

“Heuuu.....”

“Eum?”

A weird sound started to seep out her mouth. It sounded sort of like crying...but also like something else.

“What are you doing right now?”

“It's my first time getting a compliment.”

She looked up at me with sparkling eyes.

“Was I so mean....? I complimented you sometimes didn't I?”

“That was only to Yeonkyoung!”

“Ah, is that so?”

I glanced at Yeonkyoung. She started to touch her hair awkwardly while giving an uncomfortable giggle.

I didn't realize this.

Well, complimenting didn't cost money or anything so...

“You did well. You just have to keep doing what you're doing now, and you'll be great.”

“More, more more!”

She held my hands and looked at me with shining eyes.

This girl is too much sometimes.

She kept pushing her head too close to me so I lightly pushed her forehead away and spoke to Jong Sawon.

I had a question for him.

“How was it that you were there next to Sooah in that instant?”

“Ah, since I saw that you were running to Cho Youngoo to help him, I went to help the rest of the party. It was sheer luck.”

“I see.”

Is he saying it was coincidence?

Either way, it was a learning experience.

“I think it is important for us to keep in mind that if we ever fight against Fanged Earwigs, that there might be more of them than we can see. It is nice to earn money, but safety should always be priority above all else.”

Lastly, I looked at Park Hanbum.

“How many monsters have you killed on your way here?”

“I think about four.”

“I see there was a good reason for you to keep that bike.”

“It was all thanks to the new bow.”

The bike had become a great hunting tool thanks to the aid of the Grassland Horn Bow.

And it was helpful to the party as well. Now we didn't have to go out in search for monsters – we could use him to bring them to us.

That meant we could hunt that many more monsters in a shorter time.

I briefly wondered if he had a skill...and if his skill had something to do with driving.

But all I saw using the manual was 'Level 2 Increase Destructive Power'.

That meant his driving skill was unrelated to skill...but from his own hard work.

I had to give him credit. It was amazing what he could do on that bike.

# Chapter 69

---

Out of the 26 dead monsters, we had earned 10 ores.

Since 2 of them were blisonites, I decided not to invest them into my upgrade just yet.

If I just gathered some level 1 items and performed fusions, it would end up being quite a bit of profit so there was no need to invest every single ore into my upgrade.

I also earned 3,400 in reward points. That meant I had killed 17 monsters on my own.

If I think about the early days when I had pretty much killed all the monsters myself, it was a bit disappointing but I had to think positively.

This just meant that all my party members had raised their own abilities. This was better in the long run.

We also came up with a level 2 spear and armor.

None of us needed any more equipment so we decided to sell it – and I stored it in my manual.

“Coming up with two items this time around is all thanks to me, ok?”

Manager Kim said as he shook his glove.

This man was very talented in tooting his own horn. I mean, that glove only raises drop probability by 10%. But I'll humor him.

"Is there any place I can go wash up nearby?"

I asked Han Joonseok. I felt uncomfortable covered in all of the damn predatory toad's slime.

"Wait a moment."

While he started doing a search, I took the armor off and put it into the manual. Then I took off my top.

I wanted to keep it on, but I just couldn't bear the awful smell any longer.

Gulp.

I heard someone swallowing somewhere. I looked up, thinking it was Sooah, but I saw Bae Yeonkyoung quickly turning her head away.

After confirming there was a small brook nearby, everyone loaded into the car and headed there.

Of course, I decided it would be best to just run alongside the vehicle. Since I could probably keep up or even outrun a speeding car if I wanted to, there was no point in me stinking it all up for everyone.

It was 30 minutes into the run when I slowly started to run out of breath. But it was fine. I would probably still be able to run for a few more hours.

Park Hanbum, who was keeping pace next to me on his bike said,

“Ha....I’ve got to say that you aren’t the average Joe. I mean, I’ve seen plenty of people who were strong or fast...but I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone with stamina that even comes close to yours.”

“This is all thanks to my skill. Nothing to be amazed at.”

“I briefly heard about your skill from everyone else. Having said that, if you didn’t have the stamina and will to push yourself, this wouldn’t be possible.”

“Haha. If you think of it that way, then thank you.”

Honestly, these kinds of situations always embarrassed me a bit. Because I felt that this skill was more luck than effort. Of course I pushed myself in the beginning..and that itself was effort...but I was lucky to have chanced on this skillbook.

Tap tap.

Han Joonseok, who had been sitting in the car, opened the window and lightly tapped the car to get my attention.

As soon as I looked at him, he pointed up ahead. There was a small hill.

“If we just pass that, there will be a brook! Just a little more!”

And there it was after we passed the hill. It was probably only about 2 meters wide at best, and the water just barely came to my ankles. But this was enough to wash up.

Sqeaak.

A van suddenly stopped on top of the hill.

I sighed and looked at Han Joonseok. I could see him frowning while straining to look into the distance.

I tried to look where he was looking, but I couldn't make anything out except for a vague outline.

“Shit...”



“What is it?”

“A huge monster.. It looks about 4-5 meters tall. Probably...”

A word I had forgotten in the depths of my memories reared its head in my mind.

I had not expected to run into him in a place like this, but I guess that was too much to ask for.

“But it looks like it’s not alone. I can’t tell for sure but it seems like there’s another party in the middle of a hunt.”

“Then that’s none of our business.”

Cho Youngoo responded. Han Joonseok shook his head and said,

“They’re too far for me to be sure, but it looks like the group isn’t faring too well.”

“Why don’t we get a bit closer to see if we can measure the situation better.”

We took our car and drove up about 1 kilometers closer.

I was able to make something out now. The first thing I could see was how humongous the monster was.

Han Joonseok had said 4-5 meters but, on closer inspection, it was 3 meters tall and over 5 meters long.

I checked my memories and came up with the monster's name.

“Splendense.”

It was a level 4 monster.

“Interesting name.”

“Well, the person who first comes across the monster gets to name it so..I heard that they derived it from the scientific name of the beetle.

Just like the name, it looked like a beetle. It used its horns and front feet to plow into the ground.

Like most bug type monsters, their weak spot was their stomach. But since the Splendense usually moved with their stomachs close to the ground, it was hard to attack.

And even if we were able to flip it over to strike at its “weak” spot, it will be hard to make any real damage since it was so huge.

“The situation...doesn't look too great.”

Han Joonseok said.

“Is it critical?”

“They have about 30 hunters in all. But there seems to be about 10 of them on the ground. I can’t tell if they’re alive or dead from here.”

“Let’s try and get there as soon as possible.”

My team drove the car as fast as it could go. The ground kicked up clouds of dust as the wheels spun in a roar.

Park Hanbum and I followed behind as quickly as possible as well.

The closer we got, we saw that the situation was even worse than we expected.

There were only 15 of them standing.

In that short time, 5 of them had fallen.

As soon as we arrived on the scene, the other hunters started to cheer at the top of their lungs.

“Help is here!”

“But they’re not our team!”

“It doesn’t matter who they are! Please help us!”

Yep. Bad, all around. They were so desperate they didn’t even care who we were.

“SunbehOppa, that’s...”

“Ah, I saw. But let’s first help them out and figure it all out later.”

One of the collapsed men was holding a flag.

A wheel pattern on a white background. Team Ezekiel.

But there was no reason for us to deny them help.

It’s not as if I hated these people before us. I hated what their team represented...but not the individual people.

Shwing.

As soon as my weapon and armor appeared from storage, I ran headfirst into battle. I felt Park Hanbum look after me in surprise.

Kyaa!

The Splendense, which had been taken aback by the roar of the car and bike engines at first, finally seemed to gained a bit of control and moved surprisingly fast on its short legs to try and stomp on me.

Slam!

As the monster slammed and plowed into the ground with its front legs, it felt as if there was a small explosion – clods of dirt flew up in all directions.

I had already jumped away from the attack while my archers started shooting their arrows.

And the arrows bounced off with no effect but the resounding noise of hitting a boulder.

Keeek?!

Its feelers began to twitch and I saw its eyes look from me to them.

Slam!

My Honcheon sword made a small explosion as it broke the

monster's second leg.

“Yes!”

I heard someone yelling out loudly.

“To think he can cut off its leg in just one try!”

“Shit! Effing Yes!”

“We're saved!”

The Ezekiel Hunters were beside themselves.

But it was still too early to cheer just yet.

Swiing!

“Uh...?”

Pow!

The monster had stamped on one of the hunters who had been cheering loudly.

His body, pierced by the monster's foot, was a bloody, gut

spilling mess. Dead for sure.

So why the hell did you scream like that! Of course you'll draw the monster's attention like that!

“Cheonsang!”

Another hunter yelled out with a cry. He raised his head up and dumbly looked at the dead body hanging off the monster's foot.

Shit! Were they close?

But even still! Get the hell out of the way!

Stomp!

The monster raised its leg higher to stomp down once more. And the target remained still.

I sprinted to push the idiot out of the way.

Stomp!

“Keuk!”

I left the miserable hunter to continue crying out in pain as he just rolled around on the ground. I immediately got up to swing

out with my Honcheon sword.

The monster's front feet that had been stomping up and down unrelentlessly immediately stopped and backed up.

I guess it didn't want to go up against the Honcheon sword a second time. Smart for a bug.

"Please keep shooting your bows! And Manager Kim! Stop playing around and cast your sleep spell!"

"Will it work on a huge monster like that?"

"It doesn't matter if it doesn't work! I just need you to distract it!"

Of course a distraction wasn't too helpful. The monster's eyes were placed wide apart so that it could spot a wide range. What I was aiming for was a small enough distraction that I could get close to it.

Slam!

It stomped where I was standing just a moment earlier.

Clods of dirt flew all around and behind me but I kept running.



As soon as I started to swing with the Honcheon sword, the monster began to back up.

That meant it had identified me as the most dangerous opponent.

I began to run in a zig zag and reached the monster.

“Sleep!”

Haaht!

It was then that Manager Kim’s magic fell down over the beetle’s body.

I would normally back away from the target in this case, but Manager Kim was using the Floodplain Cane and adjusted the range of attack to only hit the monster.

Bugs sleep too. And luckily for us, all organisms that sleep are affected by the sleep spell.

“Sleep! I said sleep!”

I spied Manager Kim on the side raising both arms, with a cane in each hand, and yelling out with a face full of concentration.

It was a funny sight to see him with a cane in both hands, but I

couldn't deny the efficacy of it.

I know of some magicians who tie up a number of canes with different effects and walk around with the bundle.

If course it's better to have one high level cane than a bunch of level 1 canes, so there aren't too many who do that.

Anyway, if he keeps yelling out like that, even if the monster wanted to go to sleep..I doubt it would be able to.

But I felt the Splendense halt for a moment before moving again.

It was feeling the effects of the sleep magic. Since it was a high level monster, it didn't fall asleep...but it did slow down.

“Wow, it's working.”

“Of course it is! I'm sure no one else thought of using two canes at once like I did!”

They did. There are actually a lot of people who thought of it before you, you old man.

# Chapter 70

---

“Didn’t you just decide to use both canes because you felt it was a waste to only use one?”

“Hey!”

“Next time if we get another cane, you can hold the third one in your mouth.”

“Isn’t that a scene from a really old cartoon?...”

Manager Kim and Sooah stepped back while I ran behind the stumbling monster.

No matter how fast I was, it was difficult to get behind it unawares...but it was possible now.

The monster’s movements became further slower.

From behind the monster, I slid right under him to get at his underbelly.

“Kkeung!”

From under him, I began to put all my strength into pushing his body over.

As a bug type, it was light compared to its size, and I was able to lift him off with my current strength.

It began to claw at the ground in desperately – futilely trying to keep from rolling over.

“Nuh uh uh.”

I pierced its vulnerable belly with my sword.

Stab!

Shiver!

I could feel the huge body of the monster start to shake.

It began to claw at the ground even harder to now try and shake me off.

“Heub!”

Stab!

I pushed my Honcheon sword all the way in this time so that only the hilt of the sword was visible and refused to be shaken off.

I dug my feet into the ground while holding onto the hilt.

I was in the perfect position to use my strength.

Both hands on grasping the hilt, I pushed with my shoulder as I tried to lift my upper body off the ground.

One of the Splendense's leg lifted up off the ground.

“Oh oh!”

“He lifted it!”

“Is he trying to flip it over?”

Even before I learned the effort skill, I was able to squat 250 and dead press 300.

That was something even a pro bodybuilder would have had a hard time doing.

You might question if a lowly porter could achieve something like this...but unlike athletes, porters could take all the supplements or drugs they want. And most porters do take drugs – out of necessity. And I did the same.

Being already that strong, combining my initial strength with the

300 percent buff...I could probably lift 1 ton at this point.

Kikik!

The Splendense's body was almost at a right angle to the ground now.

“Oh oh?”

“It's working!”

“Are you serious? How the hell is he doing that?”

I could hear the surprise mixed with excitement in everyone's screaming voices.

But people who have flipped bugs for fun know.

That something like this isn't easy.

Plllllllll!

The monster's shell began to open up to reveal a wing.

Scrape scrape scrape scrape!

And its legs kept on scraping furiously on the ground.

My feet lost their balance and grip for a moment.

I couldn't keep this up.

Pluck!

As soon as I plucked the sword from its underbelly, a yellowish liquid began to ooze out.

I guess I'll try stabbing you with the bloodysword instead.

Slam!

I slipped out from beneath after jamming my bloodysword, and his body slammed forcefully to the ground.

Kiiii!

The monster was definitely a lot slower than before. I don't know if it's because of his wound or the bloodysword at work...but it was noticable.

Shwing shwing!

The arrows kept flying in the air, aiming for the monster's eyes,

while Cho Youngoo and Jong Sawon did all they could to draw its attention.

Attacked from all sides and unable to do anything, the monster swung its legs this way and that while spinning around.

It looked like nothing, but those legs were dangerous.

Cho Youngoo and Jong Sawon backed up.

Tap.

Seeing an opening, I jumped up onto the monsters' back.

Its shell was a hard exoskeleton of chitin.

Perfect target for my Honcheon sword.

Slam!

Slam!

One after another, I struck at the shell with the sword while I hopped here and there – causing a small explosion with each hit. One of its legs lifted up to try and swipe at me.

Kakak!



I just hopped away from each attack...which landed on the monster itself. If it was human, I'm sure it would have pulled out its hair in frustration since I was evading every single one of its attacks. Poor thing.

Slam!

I slammed down my sword one more time. But the monster's hard shell did not look like it would crack any time soon. Stupid bastards and their hard shells.

But I'm sure that even though it wasn't doing any damage on the outside, the explosions were causing internal damage inside.

And it would have a difficult time recovering because of the bloody sword still stuck in its underbelly. Good.

And just when I thought all I needed to do was drag the fight out while I let the bloody sword do its work..

Crack.

“Uh uh?”

The monster's hard shell cracked open and revealed its wings.

Nah...surely it wasn't going to fly into the air?

I've never seen something like this happen with my own eyes...!

I quickly got off its back.

Whoosh!

And almost at the exact time, the bastard flew into the air.

I let out a sigh as I watched the giant beast hovering about 10 meters in the air.

Isn't it too much for a monster of that size to be able to fly in the air like that?

Oh well.

Thanks to that, it became much easier to fight it.

Shwing! Shwing!

Arrows flew out and hit its wings. Unfortunately, even though they looked thin...they were actually thin for its size...but thick enough where the arrows didn't pierce right through.

But they did make it harder for the monster to fly.

And the attacks didn't stop there.

Being in the air meant that its weakest part was fully exposed – its underbelly.

Thank you, sir, for volunteering your stomach up for attacks.

Shwing!

Kiekkk!

This time, an arrow flew at its stomach from the side and lodged itself right in. It was Park Hanbum, shooting at it while riding around on his bike.

Not bad, Park Hanbum. His shots were powerful enough that they were making the Splendense flinch with each hit.

Shwing!

Shwing!

And now two arrows shot out at the same time from the same place. But the more powerful shots were being fired from our new archer's side – since he had the Level 3 bow.

I put up my thumb at him and hurriedly went to where Han

Joonseok and Bae Yeonkyoung stood.

I decided to trust in Park Hanbum's bike skills and help those two instead.

Shwing!

And just then, an arrow perfectly hit the monster square in one of its buggy eyes.

It was Han Joonseok's stalker.

"Nice!"

Cho Youngoo made a fist pump in the air with a big old smile on his face.

Kya!

The hovering monster turned to Han Joonseok and moved to attack.

The damage was big but that meant the monster had new motivation to get back at the one who got its eye.

I mean, if it were me, I would probably try to kill the one who poked out my eye first too.

Han Joonseok and Bae Yeonkyoung were in danger.

They couldn't protect themselves against a level 4 monster.

Even our best defense, Cho Youngoo with his level 3 shield, wouldn't last very long against a diving attack from a Splendense.

A back up plan?

I didn't have anything of the sort.

But I did have super strength...and the Honcheon sword to deliver my strength properly.

I decided that right when it got as close as possible without hitting us, I would hit it explosively with the Honcheon sword to change its course.

Ah...I know I came up with it...but it sounds like a stupid plan. No matter.

Kyaaa!

“Cho Youngoo! Jong Sawon! Stand by and attack when it gets close to the ground!”

“You don’t need us to help with defense?”

Cho Youngoo shouted out.

“I’ll block it! Sooah!”

“OK!”

She gave her hand a quick whisk and I felt my body get lighter as the 1 person buff activated. With this, my strength went up to 450 percent. I could probably lift 2 tons right about now.

Maybe even flip over a truck.

“It’s coming!”

I yelled out loud as I held the Honcheon sword with both hands. In order to stay flying in the air, the Splendense had to have a relatively light body...but it was still probably about a ton.

Would I be able to withstand the impact, no, hit back with enough power to change the course of monster piledriving into me from 10 feet in the air?

# Chapter 71

---

I jumped toward the Splendense that was diving towards me. I could see its long horn. And we were face to face in mere moments.

“Go to hell!”

I put all my strength into striking its horn.

Slam!

You’ve heard this.

“Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.”

Due to this, being the lighter of the two, I was pushed back almost 10 meters while it was only pushed back 1 meter.

I was the one who made the strike, but it felt more as if it had struck me.

The good news was that I had messed up its trajectory enough to have it crash to the ground – and it was 3 meters away from my party members. I looked at it. Its horn was hanging at a weird angle and one of its wings was folded up awkwardly.

Cho Youngoo and Jong Sawon hurriedly ran towards the fallen monster.

The Splendense looked as if it didn't know what hit it.

At first glance, it almost looked so still that it seemed dead or unconscious. But if you looked carefully, you could see that it was slowly fidgeting as if trying to get a hold of itself.

But those two knew they couldn't pass up such an opportunity as this.

Cho Youngoo advanced from the side.

Covering most of his body with his shield, he stabbed out at the other eye with his sword.

Kyaaak!

The monster let out a shriek as it shook its head and tried to get up on its front legs. But Jong Sawon came out from behind Cho Youngoo swinging widely with his Rubicon sword.

Shwing!

The clashing sound of iron against iron rang out as the Splendense's front leg came away with scratches from the strike. It wasn't something very noticeable, but the important part was that the sword had cut him – however little.



That meant it was susceptible to damage – even on its hard exoskeleton.

Jong Sawon's blade shined in the light, but the Splendense ignored it and stomped down on the ground with its legs.

I don't know if it was having a hard time moving properly because of the sleep spell, the attack, or both, but none of its attacks were landing anywhere close to the two men.

“Hey...you think they'll kill it?”

“Shouldn't we try to go in and do something now?”

“Well....”

“But it was our monster from the start. It's a waste to just let them kill it.”

“Hey, we still have our pride.”

“You know that item drop probability is super high around here though right? What if a skillbook or something else really crazy drops? If it's a level 4 item, the starting price is 1 million.”

Most of them were level 2s with some who had level 3 equipment here and there. But just because they had level 3 weapons like I did didn't mean they could do what I was doing.

It seemed like they gathered a bunch of level 2 and level 3 hunters to bring down a level 4 monster...but they bit off more than they could chew.

To try and bring down a monster who was one level higher than you were was, quite frankly, suicide...no matter how many of you there were.

The moment they discovered this big guy, they should have run away without looking back.

But, unable to hold back their greed, they had tried to fight – which had ended with half of their party collapsed on the floor like rag dolls. And there were a good number of them who died as well.

Hearing that they were trying to get in at the end so that they could take possession of the drop items when they didn't do any of the work...it seems they didn't learn their lesson.

As I saw them starting to sidle in little by little, I dashed for the Splendense and raised my Honcheon sword in the air.

Having suffered through Jong Sawon's attacks this whole time, I could see that its leg was now half severed.

Jong Sawon had set the table for me. I just had to eat my meal.

I gripped the hilt of my sword with both hands and cut through the air as if I were pouring every ounce of power into that strike.

SLAM!

My blade hit the monster's front leg and exploded.

Though its thick leg would usually be able to withstand my sword's attacks, in its half attached state, the black appendage flew off with the explosion.

The Rubicon Sword had severed it, and the Honcheon Sword broke it off.

I like that.

And from Jong Sawon's look, I could see he approved as well.

Kiiing!

Slam!

Kyaaa!

We used the same method to take care of the other front leg.

Now the Splendense was without its main weapon. All it could do

was try and bite us with its relatively small mouth or sit on us to try and smoosh us to death.

And you can't forget that my bloodysword was still at work, sucking away at its life source. Because it was so huge, we haven't seen the effects of this yet...but it was only a matter of time.

This was the end.

All that was left was to kill it.

“Attack!”

As if they were waiting for just this moment, the standing members of Team Ezekiel yelled out and ran towards the fallen monster.

It looked like they were going to aim for the weaker looking hind legs.

But I wasn't about to let them make a useless attack so that they could claim contribution.

Slam!

“Eut?”

“What!”

I slammed my sword into the ground in front of the running hunters. As it made a small explosion on impact, the men cursed out a few words as they stepped back.

I looked at them with a smiling face and said.

“It is dangerous so please stand back.”

“That’s....we, we will help you.”

A short but sturdy looking man responded.

I’m sure they were thinking I was higher than a level 4 hunter at this point.

“I do not want there to be any more casualties than there already are. There is a chance the monster will attack ever the more violently out of desperation, so it is advised to stay where you are.”

Then I added.

“And if there is someone who insists of attacking this monster still, I will assume that your aim is to disrupt my fight.”

Gulp.

I heard someone swallowing loudly in the small group.

I basically said in a roundabout way that that would signify an attack against me.

[+400]

It was only after 10 minutes or so that I was finally able to kill it.

Since it was so big, it didn't die even after cutting off the head, scooping out its eyes, or splitting open its belly. It was a lot of work to finally get it to give up.

It was only after I had pretty much butchered it up that I finally got my reward points.

After recovering my bloodysword, my party members and I stood posted around the monster as we waiting for it to evaporate.

All the members of Team Ezekiel moved off to one side and started to tend to the wounded. Luckily, it seemed they had a healer, as no more of them died.

“Everyone keep on alert and stand by. We do not know how they will decide to act at any point. They might decide to do a surprise attack.”

“Do you think they'll go that far...?”

Bae Yeonkyoung asked.

“I’m hoping they won’t. But there’s nothing wrong with being careful...”

And one person from the Ezekiel team started walking toward us. He looked like he may be the leader.

“I am Team Ezekiel’s Kim Jaemin. Thank you for helping us with the hunt.”

I could already hear his intention from those few words.

Helping with the hunt, you say? I can’t just let that slide.

“We were late on the scene because we were scoping out the situation. If we had been a bit quicker on the scene, we might have been able to save more people. I feel that that is all too unfortunate.”

I said this as I looked pointedly at the 5 dead bodies.

# Chapter 72

---

This was my way of telling them that we didn't just help with the hunt – we saved their lives.

His expression hardened. I guess he must have taken me for a chump.

It would have been best for everyone if he just backed off...but that didn't seem to be the case.

“But...do you know that this is Ezekiel territory?”

“I'm not sure...I don't think I've heard that, no.”

“All the roads leading here are supposed to be blocked...”

“So are you saying right now that you purposely blocked off roads?”

“That is. Of course because this is our territory.”

“And who made that ruling?”

The initial ruling by the government was that they would acknowledge partial ownership for parties...not ownership of everything.



Nothing in the ruling said anything about the right to occupy land that had not been granted in the first place to do what they wanted with it. And it was because of this little point that they had taken the initiative to block the roads.

“That’s obviously by the government...”

This idiot.

“So are you saying that you will stick by what you just stated and accept all the repercussions as well?”

“...what?”

“It is true that the government approved teams to raid and occupy territories. But nowhere in the rulings did they approve blocking off roads and rights to passage.”

“I see. Well ok then.”

Kim Jaemin nodded his head and walked away.

“Hey...he’s actually backing off?”

Sooah asked.

“The monster’s still evaporating. Nothing has dropped yet so I’m pretty sure they’ll act based on what comes out. I’m sure if they see something worth a pretty penny, they’ll be more aggressive.”

“Scavengers. I hate those kinds of scum.”

“But didn’t you get along just fine with those kinds of people, Manager Kim?”

Sooah smirked.

“That was only when they gave me money. Those bastards aren’t giving me a paycheck. And didn’t I say that a weasel like them stabbed me in the back and I lost my job before?”

“Haha ok ok.”

It might have been because the Splendense was so huge, but it took a really long time for it to evaporate. It was only after 20 minutes that an item finally dropped.

“Hm...this....”

“Wow.”

I had been a porter for a long time and, short as it may be, my time as a hunter was spent in lots of raids.

In that time, I had killed a great number of monsters and seen plenty of items before too.

But this was really...I don't know how to put it into words.

Ruff!

A dog barked and wagged its tail furiously as it stared at us.

\*\*\*

Hellkeeper Cerberus (o)

Special Abilities: Eats items to grow. The higher the level, the more it grows. Cannot die.

\*\*\*

“Cerberus....?”

“Cerberus?”

Bae Yeonkyoung hugged the dog and asked.

Surprised at the drop, everyone came together to look at her breasts.

No, I mean, the dog she was holding to her breast.

What the hell am I saying.

“It seems that this dog here grows by eating items. It might look like a regular dog, but it might turn into a 3 headed monster later.”

Even the cheapest item is valued at over 100,000 dollars. To feed something like that to a dog. Not something for the light of heart. But one thing caught my eye.

‘Cannot die.’

There is no way the manual would have false information. That meant this was 100% fact.

If we could have this Cerberus as our ally, it could really be worth feeding the dog some items.

The only problem was, we didn’t know just how many items needed to feed it for it to be useful to us.

There was no point in investing expensive items in a dog that needed hundreds to grow a small amount.

“But there’s no way such a cute little dog can transform into a monster like that.”

Bae Yeonkyoung purred as she cuddled the dog a bit harder.

I couldn't tell what kind of dog it was.

“I think this is ‘your’ item again.”

Han Joonseok spoke.

There was no point in leaking information they didn't need to know in front of team Ezekiel. Park Hanbum, who was still new, looked at me with curious eyes.

“‘Your’ item? What does that mean...?”

“We'll explain later. Anyway, since the monster has evaporated, we should go on our way. There's no reason for us to waste any more time here. And that dog, can you...”

“Ok...be careful.”

Bae Yeonkyoung passed over the small Cerberus to me.

I held the dog by the gruff of its neck with one hand and put it into my manual.

It easily disappeared into storage.

Even if it was a living thing, it was still an item, so I guess there was no problem doing this. Anyway, this made it easier to take around.

Seeing Yeonkyoung look at me with sad and worried eyes, I brought out the dog again and handed it over to her.

Park Hanbum's expression was one for the books. It was a face that wanted to know so bad that it was almost comical to look at.

“Did something come out?”

Kim Jaemin came up to us and started poking his nose around. I shrugged and shook my head.

“Sadly nothing dropped.”

“But I thought I heard something just now...”

He might have noticed we were crowded together for a moment and gotten suspicious but...there's no way he would have thought Cerberus was an item.

“We just saw a dog come out of nowhere so we were just all petting it a bit.”

“Dog?”

I pointed to the small black dog that Yeonkyoung was lightly bouncing up and down in her arms.

Its whole body was covered in shiny black fur while the eyebrow-like fur above its eyes were flat grey ovals.

“Then we’ll be taking off.”

“Please stop right there.”

There was a bit of steel in Kim Jaemin’s voice.

Was he really trying to do something?

Even if he had a healer, it’s not as if his remaining men were in any shape to fight us.

They only looked like they had about 15 men who could put up any type of fight. But even if they had double that, they wouldn’t be able to beat me.

Fighting against people was easier than fighting against monsters in one aspect. If you just showed them how much more powerful you were, most would just turn tail and run.

“If you think you can stop us, go ahead.”

“I’m trying to say that I heard something. Didn’t you hear it?”

“What...?”

Vrooom~!

I looked where Kim Jaemin was squinting at and saw a vehicle coming our way. It was still a ways off but it looked like it would reach us in less than a minute.

And soon, a 2.5 ton truck pulled up while a bunch of people jumped out of it.

All of them had at least level 2 equipment with some who had level 3 equipment on them.

There seemed to be about 20 in number.

Kim Jaemin shook his cellphone at us.

“Now are you ready to talk?”

“Well...now that you finally did something underhanded, I feel more at peace. I was wondering when it would come.”

35 of them circled all around us – 15 unhurt men from earlier and



the 20 reinforcements.

It seemed they were trying to intimidate by outnumbering.

But just then, another truck pulled up on the scene. It didn't look to be from team Ezekiel. Because the flag attached to it was unfamiliar.

Screech.

“They look like Ezekiel bastards. Should we help?”

This was the first time being lent a hand by complete strangers. It felt weird, to be honest.

This evened up the score.

But my favorite part was this – how Kim Jaemin's face crumpled up from a smile to a scowl.

“Now, what will you do?”

I just wanted all this to be over and for everyone to leave. I didn't want to hurt anyone when it was unnecessary.

Kim Jaemin's face suddenly brightened up again.

When I followed his gaze, another truck that seemed to be theirs was heading this way.

The vehicle stopped and a gruff voice yelled out from within.

“What are you doing here?!”

“We’re taking care of some men who have broken through the barricade.”

I guess this person was higher up in the ranks than Kim Jaemin.

“Well, if you take care of all of them, maybe things will settle down a bit.”

Hm. This one seemed strong. I could see that he had level 4 equipment.

“Why don’t you try?”

“I was going to even before you asked. Everyone! Prepare for battle!”

“Yes!”

37 of them all took up their weapons.

Jesus. But then another truck was ambling their way.

I thought it was another Ezekiel truck, but Han Joonseok spoke.

“They’re regular hunters. How...”

“We made a call to some people we know...they came faster than I expected.”

An unfamiliar man said as he stepped off his truck.

Things were getting out of control.

“Shit. What the hell...?”

The head honcho looking guy started to curse to himself.

He was about 170cm. A bit on the short side but I could see that he had a strong build.

I checked him out using my manual.

\*\*\*

Name: Jang Taesoo

Skill: Agility (4), Increases response rate by 200%

Additional skills: None

Proficiency: 6

Equipment: Smash Sword (4), North Sea Armor (3), Shock Absorbing Glove (1), Quick Shoe (1)

\*\*\*

As expected of a level 4 skill, the Agility skill raised his response rate significantly.

But it was still nothing compared to the reflexes my effort skill gave me.

The only thing that I had to watch out for was his Smash Sword.

That sword had an additional option – the sword's strikes would deal critical damage to monsters at random.

But other than those random hits, it was no different from a no name level 4 sword.

Nothing to sweat over.

And we outnumbered them now – 6 to 4.

Even if they had a level 4 hunter, it was game over if the rest of his team is wiped out. Additionally, his armor can't protect every part of him. If my archers just shot him in the eye – bye bye.

“You were saying you would show us something...”

“Keu keu keu....”

Jang Taesoo started to give out an evil laugh.

“I don't think I said anything funny.”

“Take this time to bask in that happiness of your right now. As soon as the rest of our reinforcements get here, not a single one of you will leave alive.”

“Hm. Is that so? How long do you think it'll take for them to get here? 10 minutes? 20 minutes? If I had to guess, I'd say it would take them over an hour?”

He didn't say anything, but I could tell from his expression.

“It seems you guys had a bunch of your team sprinkled here and there to prevent other from hunting. But you guys were too greedy. Even if you brought every one of your party members here, you'll have what...300? Are you saying that you'll take over the

entire Southern wetlands with so few men? We have no intention of letting you do that.”

“Shut up! You bastard! I’ll rip apart that loud mouth of yours!”

“Like I said. If you think you can, go ahead.”

“Shit!”

# Chapter 73

---

Slam!

Jang Taesoo hit the ground running. I had suspected he would fight, but I didn't expect him to make his move so soon.

He must have been pretty sure of himself.

In his mind, since he had a level 4 skill that increases his response rate by 200%, he would have expected he could bring me down before I could do anything. But, including Sooah's buff, mine was at 360%.

To think he could overcome me with just 200% was folly.

Slap!

I grabbed his wrist.

Did I surprise you?

Craack.

“Ahhh!”

I gave it a bit of a squeeze (ok more than a squeeze) and he

screamed as he dropped his sword.

I picked up the item and put it in my manual before slamming into him with my shoulder.

Slam!

Crack!

The satisfying crunch of his ribs breaking.

When I let go of his wrist, Jang Taesoo collapsed in a lifeless heap.

I looked toward Kim Jaemin, whose mouth was open wide in disbelief, and said,

“Do you want more?”

“That...that’s....”

I hoped this was enough to convince them they were no match.

I’m not a killer. I know that if there is no reason for violence, it is best to avoid it.

“Keukeukeu...you thought it would end like this?”



Jang Taesoo snickered while on the ground. Surprising. He should have had a hard time breathing let alone talk. Stubborn bastard.

I looked down at him and said,

“I think it would be best for both sides if we stopped right now.”

“How naive.”

“What?”

“That’s not how a fight works. You see..once you start...”

Spit!

Jang Taesoo spit at me.

Of course I dodged it but, in that time, he got up and made a dash for me while yelling at the top of his lungs.

“Everyone attack! Don’t hold back! We’ll get every one of these bastards!”

Before he could grab my legs, I knocked him out, but things took a turn for the worse.

The men who were ready to turn back just a moment ago, were now fired up again.

And Kim Jaemin took up his sword as calmly said.

“Kill them all.”

“Waaaaaah!”

All of them started running.

“Kill them! Shit!”

“That girl is mine!”

Shwiing!

Ping!

Slam!

Magic and arrows flew through the air and weapons clashed.

“Ahhk!”

“Mother!”

Slam!

“Keuk!”

I could see deaths unfolding all around me.

Usually when there is a battle of 100 vs 100, 10 people at most fight like crazy while the rest look around more focused on defense.

But Ezekiel’s men were different.

They were weak as individuals, but I could see that they were fighting as a group.

Not one of them backed down. Each and every one of them were fighting with all they had.

The ones who had fallen into panic instead were the men who had decided to help us. Because this was still unfamiliar territory to them.

And it seemed I wasn’t the only one who saw this.

“These bastards...they look like they’ve done this a time or two.”

Han Joonseok spoke. And I only nodded.

Now that things had gone south, there was no reason for us to hold back either.

I could forgive their folly once...but not a second time – especially after I'd given them numerous chances to pull back.

“I will trust you all to play your roles!”

I yelled out simply and jumped into the middle of battle. Since we were being pressured, I had to do something.

Right now, Ezekiel was our enemy, and we didn't have the kind of room to show them any leniency.

“Kyak! Die!”

I turned to see a man charging at me with his sword and swung with my Honcheon sword.

He had been wearing a sturdy armor, but the explosive attack of my weapon easily broke through.

Pow!

[+200]

His body blew to pieces with a small explosion.

“Ahht!”

“What is that! A bomb?”

“Focus and attack!”

Kim Jaemin yelled out quickly, but it didn't soothe the panic I had created with my sword. And in that same moment, I made a dash for where Kim Jaemin was standing.

Slam! Slam!

As soon as I killed two more on the way, I could feel the confidence from the Ezekiel slide slowly slip away. But that was only in my general area.

All of the others from Ezekiel were still fighting full force everywhere else.

In order to end this as quickly as possible, I had to get rid of the inciter and leader first.

“Block him!”

Realizing he was my target, he quickly gave his order.

Men of level 2 and level 3 started to make a human barricade in front of me.

I move my head this way and that as I yelled out,

“Come and get it!”

“Ahhhh!”

Three attacks came at me. Two swords and one spear.

The speed of the spear was fast.

Tap!

I grabbed the spear between my arm and hip before I gave a good yank. The man holding onto the other end easily followed suit and came between me and the two swords.

“Keuk?”

“Jongsoo!”

“This piece of shit!”

After killing one of their own by accident, they were hopping mad.

-[+200]

Hm. I get points for killing someone indirectly too?

Ping!

An arrow whistled toward me. Raising my sword up, the arrow bounced off my blade to hit the man trying to attack me from behind.

“Keuk!”

-[+200]

Even after killing their comrades so easily, the attacks didn’t stop.

“Die!”

One man yelled out with steel in his voice as he ran for me.

Maybe it was because he was so desperate to kill, but he left

himself wide open. There was no point in blocking or even dodging. I just swung down with my sword.

Slam!

His armor crumbled and he was catapulted away. He rolled into another of his comrades and started to violently cough up blood.

I guess he didn't die from that but it looked like he would be hard pressed to keep fighting.

Gulp!

Maybe I was finally able to knock some fear into these fools because the remaining two Ezekiel members stood their ground instead of attacking.

Then I guess it's my turn to take the initiative?

Swoop!

It was then that something black passed me at an incredible speed.

Cerberus.

“Keh, Kelby!”



Yeonkyoung's shrieking voice.

Kelby? Did she already give it a name?

But what is that dog trying to do?

Cerberus started to eat a dagger that was dropped on the ground.

It was a level 2 stealth dagger.

“What, what the?”

An Ezekiel hunter that had seen this started to back away. It was understandable since a normal looking dog started to eat a dagger out of nowhere.

Gnash. Gansh!

After gobbling up the dagger in mere moments, Cerberus spied a fallen shield and started running towards that as well.

I hurriedly pulled up my manual to check its stats: 2.

His level had gone up one point.

Hm..kind of a waste.

“This little shit...!”

One of the hunters that had backed up just moments before kicked his foot.

Pat.

Cerberus disappeared. And the man, just kicking at air, started to look around wildly.

“Where the hell did that shit go...”

Gnash!

“Aaaaak!”

Just as quickly as it had disappeared, Cerberus reappeared and chomped on the hunter’s offending leg.

It had bit down so hard that I could see the white of his bone.

Leaving the hunter to roll around on the the ground in misery, Cerberus focused again on running toward the shield.

Floop! Floop!

Even with my eyes, it seemed as if Cerberus was disappearing and reappearing again and again.

While wondering how it was doing that, the item it had gobbled up came to mind.

Level 2 stealth dagger.

It was a weapon that gave the wielder the option of concealing him/herself a second at a time.

“This....stupid dog!”

A hunter raised his sword, blade down, and plunged it where Cerberus was.

Pat!

Instead of the sound of sword plunging into the dog, I heard the sound of something more like a leather drum being hit.

“This...this?”

Pat pat!

He kept stabbing at Cerberus, but the dog ignored the idiot and

gobbled up the shield after reaching it.

Gulp!

As soon as it swallowed the shield up whole.

Woosh!

It suddenly grew as big as a small calf.

It looked exactly the same – just bigger.

“Heuk?”

Even if it looked like a dog, I’m sure it couldn’t have looked cute to the men attacked by it – and the Ezekiel hunter slowly started to back away.

I tried to think back on what Cerberus had just eaten. It was a round shield that covered a diameter of the forearm with a pattern as if the shield was cut into four pizza slices...

Aegis shield.

It had the option of reflecting the damage made to the shield.

Standing between me and the other Ezekiel hunters, Cerberus

slowly turned around to look for other items.

But seeing there weren't anymore lying on the ground, the big dog looked back at the hunters.

It was looking at the level 2 items they were holding.

“What are you doing! Kill it!”

Kim Jaemin screeched. Obeying order, the two hunters slowly walked towards Cerberus holding their swords.

Slam!

Gnash!

Cerberus plowed into one while biting into the other.

The sword the hunter had been holding easily snapped in Cerberus' jaws – leaving only the hilt.

Gnash gnash.

Without a care, Cerberus pawed at the other sword, held it between both paws before plopping down to gobbling it up.

It looked like the very picture of a child chewing up his lollipop.

“That...that dog...”

The last hunter still with his sword raised it into the air.

“Keung!”

“Heuk?”

At Cerberus’ yelp, the hunter jumped back in surprise.

Since it had grown in size, its yelps had amplified loudly as well.

Everyone looked toward us.

“What is that...?”

“Monster?”

“I think it’s a dog?”

“How can a dog be so big?”

“What is it eating?”

“It looks like a sword...?”

“You’re saying it’s eating an item?”

“Crazy. You’re right. Is several hundreds of thousands of dollars a dog’s chew thing?”

So surprised by this new scene, the battle had seemingly paused.

Gulp!

Cerberus started to stretch out before it let out a nice big burp.

I can’t believe it was able to eat and digest that...

“But isn’t that a monster? Don’t we have to kill it?”

Someone asked – to which Bae Yeonkyoung screamed out loud.

“Kelby is not a monster! It’s a pet!”

“How the hell is there a pet that eats items...?”

Ping!

And an arrow shot out somewhere from Ezekiel’s group.

Its target was Cerberus.

Pat!

But the arrow just bounced off Cerberus' thick skin like a toy.

“Keuk!”

And the archer who had shot the arrow, let out a pained yell. The damage had reflected right back to him.

Cerberus was able to absorb the abilities of the items he ate.

I looked at Cerberus and shouted an order.

“Cerberus! Attack!”

I raised my hand to point at Kim Jaemin. But it just looked at me curiously before plopping right down onto the ground.

“Sunbuh Oppa. I think you were just ignored.”

“I know ok?”



“Call it Kelby.”

Yeonkyoung whispered to me. Hm...can't hurt right?

# Chapter 74

---

“Kelby.”

Wiggle.

Its ear twitched. Hm. It seemed to recognize its name.

But does it understand anything beyond that?

“Kelby, attack that guy.”

“Arf!”

Surprisingly, Kelby jumped from the ground and ran toward Kim Jaemin.

A pet that can understand the human language?

Wow. It seems I had far underestimated this item.

“Ahhhh!”

After swinging his sword a couple of times to no avail, Kim Jaemin started to turn tail and run from Kelby.

As soon as both Kim Jaemin and Kelby departed the scene, the battle resumed again.

“Where are you looking with your enemy right in front of you!”

Woosh!

Out of nowhere, someone had crept up on me to yell before swinging his weapon at me.

I love these idiots who give out warnings before attacking.

Slam!

Instead of thanking him for his thoughtful idiocy, I hit him hard enough to send him flying away.

Since the power of the Honcheon sword was proportionate to the power of the wielder, the level 2 armors broke into pieces with every explosive strike.

The thought that I was wasting perfectly good items in this way briefly flitted in and out of my mind.

“Ahhh!”

Slam!

And after taking care of that last man, I saw that there weren't any more hunters blocking my way.

“Don't stop!”

“Shit! Where the hell is Jaemin!”

Thanks to Kelby and me, the Ezekiel team was slowly starting to get pushed back.

“I guess I just need to get that one to end this.”

I looked at the back of Kim Jaemin, who was still running away from Kelby.

He was running toward his vehicle.

Kelby was still chasing after him but, compared to its big size, the dog was on the slower side. Since it was still a puppy, I couldn't expect it to run any faster yet.

But I could finally see who the winner would be. Kelby was still running with its tongue out, jolly as ever, while Kim Jaemin was steadily losing speed. And just as Kelby caught up, it bit out Jaemin's throat.

And that was the end.

Not long after Kim Jaemin lost his life, all the other Ezekiel hunters started dropping one by one.

We were victorious. While everyone on the Ezekiel team had perished, only two on our side had died. Though two deaths were still not a light burden, it was far better than the deal our enemies had gotten.

Han Joonseok came up to me and whispered,

“Party head, the dead bodies will soon begin to evaporate.”

“Let’s pile them all in one place and burn the bodies.”

This was so that we could hide the fact that they evaporate. Though digging a hole and burying them is also a good idea, it would take too long – we couldn’t take that risk.

Luckily, we were able to move them all into a pile fairly quickly. We poured gasoline all over the bodies, lit them on fire, and took care that the fire didn’t go out.

“What will we do with the dead from our side?”

Han Joonseok asked this time.

“We can just leave them. They won’t evaporate.”

There was a reason why I was so sure.

As the manual had upgraded, there were a few new pieces of information that came with it – and one of them was information on the evaporation system.

1. The dead must have a skill to evaporate
2. Only those in contact with people affected by the new system will evaporate

This means that those who are affected by the level 0 skill are affected by the new system – meaning everyone in our party since they receive Sooah's friendship buff.

We began to gather up the still intact equipment left behind by the Ezekiel team to divvy up between the other hunters and my party.

There were a total of about 30 items. This was a very low number of items since about 40 of them had died.

“Hm...a lot fewer than I had expected.”

“There are a bunch that I broke while fighting. And Kelby ate quite a few...So you may take all of these items here.”

I used my manual to check Kelby's stats. Its proficiency was at 13, a far larger number than the count of items it had eaten. But

reflecting on that, I realized it was because Kelby had eaten the items I had broken during the fight.

What a fatass.

“You don’t need to do that...”

They began to refuse. Well, since the fight was pretty much won by me and Kelby, I’m sure they didn’t feel right taking everything.

But I was planning on taking all the item drops for my team so I didn’t care.

“Just take the items you would give to us, sell them, and give the earnings to the families of the men who have passed. I feel that would help us rest easier.”

These were men who had joined a battle that was not theirs to begin with. I had to do something for them. It was only right.

“But that monster...”

“It is an item. I don’t think it’ll cause any problems for us, but I hope you would keep this between us.”

“Certainly. I will try.”

They had already seen Kelby in action. I couldn't hide it or what it can do. News would spread fast. The least I could do is ask that they not volunteer the information if possible.

After those hunters had departed, we put out the fire and collected all the items from the evaporated bodies.

Among some of the items were a some that looked like the Escape scrolls.

“Huh? These didn't burn?”

“You think an item would burn? Items are hard to damage by conventional means. They can only truly get damaged by skills or other items.”

“But you can rip them.”

“That's because they're made for ripping. Now that you're officially a hunter, you should study the basics at least.”

“Yes! Yes sir! Yes teacher!”

“I'm teacher now?”

“Well I heard that men like it when girls call them that. It's supposed to be romantic or cute?”



“That’s only if the person saying it is wearing a schoolgirl uniform.”

“Ooh...uniform you say?”

Let me just ignore her. If I take this conversation any further, she just might show up one day dressed in a schoolgirl uniform. She would not look good in that. A giant in a uniform?

“Let’s go.”

I put all the items into storage and we left. There was no good that could come from staying here any longer.

\*\*\*

Splash!

“Puahh!”

Wearing only pants, I dove into the water. Since I had brought several changes of clothes, I figured I’d just throw this one away.

We had arrived at a nearby river to rest for the day. The fight had sapped us of our energy. We needed to rest and refuel.

I washed my body under the water as I flitted through my

manual.

Not including the items we got from the fight before, we only came up with 2 this last battle. And 12 ores in all.

Though the drop percentage was a bit low, I had nothing to complain about since we got some crazy items.

While I was checking my manual like this, I heard a rustling behind the boulder upon which I had laid out my clothes.

I tiptoed on over.

“What are you doing?”

Sooah, who had been trying to steal my clothes, began to laugh like a pervert.

“Heh heh....I wanted to do a live action play of the Fairy and the Woodcutter...”

“Don’t touch my underwear.”

“Can I touch everything else?”

“I’ll report you to the police.”

“I know you won’t”

“Whew. Now I really feel like doing it.”

I sighed lightly. I’m afraid she might really become some kind of pervert soon.

“Anyway, I’m still a bit worried..do you think everything is going to be alright?”

“What do you mean?”

“Ezekiel. We killed about 40 of them. The police might even decide to step in, no?”

“All of their men evaporated so we have nothing to worry about.”

“Do you think it’ll really be that easy?”

“Unless there is concrete evidence, they don’t interfere with hunters’ business.”

Han Joonseok, who had been soaking in the water with me asked,

“And why is that?”

“Because this job has a high mortality rate to start with. The police can only do so much. They don’t have the resources to check on every death. So, instead, they take on cases selectively. This, of course, means that hunter incidents are almost always excluded from priority investigations.”

This didn’t just apply to deaths but to disappearances as well. There were tons of monsters similar to the predatory toad that can swallow a person whole – leading to many disappearances. And when something like this happens, and the dungeon resets, a body is never found. For this reason, there is less incentive to do any serious hunter investigations. But in cases where there is conclusive evidence of a hunter doing something against the law, there are harsh penalties enforced to show the public that they are doing something about it.

But it is all a show that the government puts on to give the public the illusion of control over powerful hunters that they don’t really have in reality.

“Then we really don’t have to worry?”

“We’re fine. At least for now. Plus Team Ezekiel is known for their high mortality rates. Since this land is still fairly new, there is very low chance that anyone would really care what happened.”

This was pretty much why I did whatever I wanted in the end. I wouldn’t have wiped them out otherwise. I’m not an idiot.

And considering how they acted toward us, it’s indicative that

they acted in much the same manner to other hunters. We wouldn't be singled out as a suspect.

“Anyway, let's just try our best to steer clear of those guys. Let's consider today's events as a sort of lesson.”

“That even if we see Ezekiel guys in danger, we should just let them get eaten?”

“Honestly, I didn't think they'd be such bastards. But that just goes to show you that I am still too naive.”

“But I like that about you.”

“Thanks. That one comment made all the dirtiness of today seem to fade away.”

# Chapter 75

---

After thoroughly washing myself with soap, I went to light a bonfire. Even though it was well into summer, this new land was weirdly still fairly chilly.

I heated my meal as I dried myself off.

“It’s nice that we don’t have to feed the dog real food. And it probably doesn’t poop either.”

“Almost the perfect pet, wouldn’t you say?”

Han Joonseok laughed as he spoke aloud.

As soon as the battle had ended, Kelby had returned to its normal size and was now fast asleep within Yeonkyoung’s arms.

Speaking of Yeonkyoung, it seems as though she really loves dogs. She never took her eye off the thing from the moment it appeared.

Though she didn’t talk a lot to start with, since the dog appeared, she’s only talked with Kelby.

Well...she didn’t really talk with Kelby so much as have one-sided conversations. But since Kelby could understand human speech, it wasn’t entirely crazy.

After we finished eating, I brought out all the items again. Since I was the only one who could see the stats via my manual, I had to explain them to everyone one by one.

I first applied all the ores to my upgrade.

The items were as follows:

Escape (0) 5 sheets: Takes the user directly outside the dungeon

Light Wounds Healing Potion (0) 5 bottles: To heal light wounds

Redemption Necklace (3): Can share the ability of one object with another. Effect disappears if too far apart.

Professional Cane (3): Raises spell by 1 level.

\*\*\*

The Professional Cane obviously went to Manager Kim.

“Please return the other one. Since you purchased the Amplification Cane, you can keep that one but we will be selling the Floodplain cane.”

“I mean, I could use all three.”

“That’s your greed talking. How are you going to wield all three at one time? Are you really planning on holding one in your mouth during battle?”

“Are you crazy? I just thought I’d duct tape them all together or something.”

“Well, do whatever you want. Just make sure you don’t end up dropping one and running away because things get dangerous. Now, we have the Redemption Necklace left...”

\*\*\*

Sooah raised her hand with the quickness. Everyone else quietly averted their eyes to avoid eye contact with me.

Its ability was a pretty good one so I had expected there to be a bit of a squabble over it.

“Did you guys all talk and plan to give it to Sooah or something? She’s more a porter than a hunter so raising her ability wouldn’t really do the team any good.”

“Sunbeh Oppa. Did you already forget how I killed that roach last time? If I just have the right items, I could be a great hunter too.”

“You have a point...”



“But how is it that no one else wants it? If you stick with me, it should bring your abilities up significantly.”

“Are you asking because you don’t know?”

Manager Kim asked.

Hm....I guess it’s because of the design.

The Redemption Necklace, put simply, looked like a dog collar.

It was a black band with a silver pendant that looked like a name tag, and it was just big enough to fit snugly around the neck.

Anyway, I guess no one wanted to put something like that around their necks – no matter how great it was. I briefly imagined Manager Kim with this around his neck before I shook it out from memory.

In the end, the Redemption Pendant went to Sooah. I was hoping that Yeonkyoung would take it as a Range Dealer, but since Sooah was support to the Range Dealers...it wasn’t a bad idea to have her wear it as well.

“What ability are you going to use?”

“Hm...I was thinking about strength, but since I already have

something for that...I thought about copying your reflex instead.”

She already had the garter belt that raised her strength by 30 percent.

“I agree with that decision. It’ll help you in surprise situations.”

You don’t need to be crazy powerful. My opinion was that she needed to be just a bit strong for real battle since her main role was not killing monsters.

She was support for the party members dealing long range damage from the back. In order for her to help the archers and Manager Kim, who did not specialize in close combat, it was imperative for her to be able to react quickly to surprises.

After divvying up the items in that way, we set up the tent we brought in our car. Thinking this was better than sleeping in the car or out in the open, we had made this purchase the last time we were at Manripo.

Even though there was still time before the sun would set, since we were planning to spend the night here, we decided to pitch it early.

We had purchased a tent that was big enough for 10 people, so there was more than enough room for all of us in the party.

While everyone else was finishing pitching up the tent, I asked

Yeonkyoung to pass Kelby over to me.

I thought I needed to learn a bit more about this dog, so I started going through my tutorial.

While looking up any topics related to Kelby, I only saw a simple explanation.

Cerberus was a growth type item – it increases its ability by absorbing/eating other items.

This was something I already knew. But there was a new tidbit.

In the case that Cerberus consumed a fully intact item, it would absorb the abilities of that items as well. While if Cerberus consumed the shattered remains of an item, it would only raise its proficiency.

Additionally, Cerberus can increase its size during battle, according to its proficiency – the higher the number, the larger it can grow.

Based on this point, it was very similar to a monster. Because monsters were usually bigger in size the higher their levels.

Anyway, since it could understand human language and was pretty obedient, I didn't think we would have too many issues with it.

Except one point.

Chomp chomp chomp!

“Stop.”

Gnash Gnash.

The dog ignored my order and continued chomping at the level 1 sword.

This stupid mutt.

I take back what I said about being obedient. Cancel.

I took away the sword that Kelby was chewing at.

Kelby started whining a bit until I lightly flicked its nose – to which it became silent. Man, it really does act like a dog though.

Kelby, who didn't even give a speck of interest to any of our food, immediately perked up at the sight of items.

The reason I had brought out the sword in the first place was to train it.

If Kelby continued to eat every item it saw on the ground without listening to any commands, it would end up costing us a lot.

If possible, I wanted to be able to selectively give items to Kelby. Because if an item we really needed ended up in Kelby's stomach... that would really suck.

“Whimper.”

Kelby gave a slight whimper and looked up at me with big puppy dog eyes. Seeing its lifeless tail, it was obvious that it wanted the item back.

When I slowly started to put the sword back down, it raced for the item.

“Wait.”

I lightly pushed back on Kelby's head so that it couldn't reach the sword.

It tried with all its might to grab at the sword but, in its small puppy form, it couldn't win against my strength.

Of course it wouldn't be able to win against me in terms of power even in its larger form. But supposing that it could, my reflexes would still make it all but impossible to take the sword from me.

“Eat.”

Nom!

As soon as I moved my hand, Kelby rushed in and ate the broken item. Seeing it chomp so happily on the sword was enough to almost make me hungry.

And after doing this for about 20 minutes, dinner was finally ready.

As soon as I handed Kelby back over to Yeonkyoung, she immediately began to pet and coo at the dog as if I had put it through some horrible ordeal. And Kelby began rubbing its head into her large breasts.

I don't know why but that kind of made me angry. Feeling my stare, Yeonkyoung spoke.

“Why are you looking at Kelby with such a scary expression?”

“Well....I don't think I was making a scary expression exactly...”

“You looked about ready to eat the poor thing.”

“No. I was just looking at it because it wasn't listening.”

I muttered and shrugged.

I couldn't say what I was really thinking or else she would think I was a pervert so I kept silent.

Since I was an adult, I needed to be able to have some kind of self control. I could do that much.

Rub rub.

Rub rub.

Rub rub.

That mutt!

# Chapter 76

---

“Well does that mean we dealt the Ezekiel Team a huge blow? I mean, we unblocked the road they were barricading, “got rid of” close to 40 of them....they must be mad.”

“And? There’s only so much they can do to us on this large land. There’s no reason to be scared of them.”

The Southern Marsh was a much larger territory than the other areas.

How are they going to find us? They don’t even know my face.

I mean, the only ones who would recognize me are the guys we tied up at the barricades. But it’s not as if they’re going to draw my face and pass it around for a reward.

If they did something like that, they would end up being investigated by the government.

“All we need to focus on is hunting and collecting items.”

My primary focus while at the West Sea was growing my power, my team’s power, and even Kelby’s power now.

This meant instead of wasting our time pondering over stupid things, we should just hunt monsters. Simple.



\*\*\*

“Sunbeh Oppa! Big news!”

While I was resting after eating a simple dinner, Sooah screamed as she shoved her smartphone in my face.

As the latest model with a great big screen, it was a huge thing. But that wasn't what was important here.

My picture was on the giant screen.

“What is this. When did you take a picture of me?”

“I didn't take this one! All the ones I took are safely saved somewhere else. But look at this. This is a post from a blog that covers all things about the West Sea and someone put your picture up including what happened recently!”

“What are you talking about?”

I took the smartphone from her and started to look it over.

Not everything was recorded in the blog.

But at the very least, it described how team Delta and I had

pushed past the barricades that Ezekiel had set up.

And the fight was recorded via video.

I guess this was to be expected. There were over 1000 hunters behind us at the time. Of course someone among them would have thought to record it.

“Wow..nice filming. Looks like you’re going to become famous huh?”

Manager Kim said.

“I did expect something like this to some extent, but now that it really happened it’s a bit embarrassing. But it’s lucky that it didn’t show up on the news...”

“Party head, you come up as a top search now.”

Han Joonseok started shaking his phone and laughing.

Oh. My. God.

“Luckily it was taken from far away though so people won’t be able to identify you easily.”

“But it’ll still spell trouble – I mean they have his name and the

team name too.”

We had given those Ezekiel guys a good beating and even took their items. They had enough to report us now.

“Who’s going to bear witness and testify though? I don’t think anyone would do it.”

“Who knows. Hunters follow the money no matter what.”

Now I was starting to get nervous. I expected to gain a bit of fame – but this was a bit much.

“What do you think those Ezekiel guys will do now?”

Han Joonseok asked.

We were still unclear as to how strong the Ezekiel team was a whole. Raid teams are usually required to register and reveal their member count but, because that team is constantly adding to their number, it was hard to know.

I could only guess they were about 3-400 in number based on what a stranger had revealed.

If we were to just go off numbers alone, they were bigger than team Mercenary. But their ability was a mystery.

“They’ll probably be looking out for us. But as I said, the land is big enough that finding us will be difficult.”

“But won’t they just have to spread out and look for us since they have a lot of members?”

Sooah asked. Of course that’s a possibility. But seeing how they operated up until recently, I don’t see that happening. They liked to move in numbers.

“Team Ezekiel likes to move in big groups to accomplish tasks. They rely on this so much that they don’t even mind if a bunch of their hunters die during a fight. Think about what happened at the Baeksapyoung dungeon.”

“So?”

“If they find it hard to look for us by moving in large groups, they will resort to other methods. Worst case scenario....hunting other hunters.”

“What?”

“Didn’t you feel something was off that last fight?”

“Not really...just that they fight well? I think we would have been in trouble if Sunbeh Oppa and Kelby weren’t there.”

“The overall fighting levels on both sides were very similar. And we even had more men on our side. But we were losing the first half of the battle. What does that tell us?”

“Good coordination?”

“It was something else. That they were familiar with fighting in such situations.”

“Then...”

Sooah gulped after a moment. I nodded.

“Since they’ve stepped foot into this new land, they haven’t just been hunting monsters...”

“Surely not...”

“Of course I’m not going to assume they were purposely putting themselves in such situations...yet. Because on the other hand, if that was their goal, they wouldn’t have blocked off the Southern Marshes to start with.”

“But I guess this changes things now...”

I nodded at Han Joonseok’s murmur.

“When you succeed on this kind of hunt, you can earn about 100,000 worth of items from one hunter. Of course it could be even more than that if there are hunters with level 2 items or higher. “

100,000 dollars. If you were lucky, you could do several times that from hunting another hunter.

Since they always work using their numerical advantage, hunting humans would not only be easier than hunting a monster...but it would net more profit as well.

Any reservations they might have had in killing a fellow human being, probably flew away with the wind as soon as they smelled the money.

They might even console themselves by saying those hunters were bound to die soon anyway – it was a dangerous career.

Crackle.

The bonfire crackled and the flames seemed to dance.

The reason for the bonfire was because monsters didn't like them.

Of course there were a select few monsters who were actually attracted to light. And the team Ezekiel would probably be attracted to the fire as well.

But it was better for us to have the light so we can see our enemy.

We had hung a large LED lamp on the bumper of the car as well.

“Hm....”

Everyone else had fallen asleep already.

Having drawn first shift for lookout, I searched the portal news on Sooah's phone.

The main news was about the friction with China.

It seems the Chinese had sent out their own hunters into the West Sea as well.

There were increased tensions between the high level hunters from both sides, but it seemed Korea and China were being careful.

The two countries couldn't afford a full out war. But that didn't mean that either side was going to let the other take control of this new land either.

My plan was to keep going south. I didn't want to hunt in the north and accidentally bump into a high level Chinese hunter.

I had no interest in any of the politics involved. The Southern Marshes weren't the end of the new land. If you went even further, there was a dense forest – I'm sure there are plenty of monsters to be hunted there.

I ex'ed out of the portal and logged into the hunter market community.

People here were still on the topic of the barricades in the Southern Marshes. Oy vey.



# Chapter 77

---

- Southern Marshes now open. And under that, there were several hundred posts.
- Ha. It was blocked up completely before. So it's really open now?
- I heard that there were a bunch of people that grouped together and it opened up.
- I don't think those Ezekiel guys will let it slide.
- Well I heard that Team Delta led the entire group and forced it open.
- Oh. Looks like they're blatantly challenging Ezekiel. But it's the first time I've heard of Team Delta. Are they strong?
- I think they're a newly established team. I think they don't even have 10 people on their team.
- Crazy bastards. Don't they know about those Ezekiel guys...I guess we'll see them in the hospital soon enough.
- No no. I can't say any specifics. But those guys are strong. I don't think we have anything to worry about.
- Really? They're that strong?
- I think the people who should be careful is Team Ezekiel...not Team Delta.
- Unless they have a level 10 hunter, I think Ezekiel can handle them.
- They're not a level 10 or anything...but I saw them get rid of a Level 4 hunter.
- Level 4....?
- Are you serious? Delta's that strong? Who's the leader?
- A guy named Jeon Sangmin.
- Never heard of him.
- Someone should have heard of him if he was strong enough to knock out a level 4 hunter in one hit.

And the rest of the posts were about me.

A hunter who had fought with us is probably the one revealing all of this.

“Knock out a level 4 hunter huh...”

This was something I couldn't even dream of doing just a few months ago.

I had been saving up money so that I could become a hunter, but I didn't expect to be one until 1-2 years down the line. In fact, I thought I would become a level 2 hunter after thirty...if I was lucky.

But I had the Level 4 smash sword in my possession.

This was a weapon that had the option of dealing 100% damage to a monster.

There was a limit to the weapon but I could still deal a lot of damage to monsters of the wolf, tiger, and bear variety.

And then there was the Level 4 Immortality Skill.

I wonder what level I was really at at this point?

If you measure me based on the usual standard, I would be a level 4 hunter.

But what if you counted my level 0 skill?

I don't think I would lose if I fought against a level 5 hunter just with sheer power alone.

My physical ability alone was probably higher than a level 6..and if I got Sooah's buff on top of that?

One word popped in my head.

“Irregular.”

I was outside the norm.

Rustle.

I heard a noise coming from behind me. When I looked back, I saw Bae Yeonkyoung coming this way with Kelby in tow.

Kelby was fast asleep. If I just looked at its sleeping face, it looked like any other dog. It was hard to believe that this sweet looking dog could kill a level 3 hunter.

“Why aren't you sleeping?”

“I couldn't fall asleep.”

“Because of what happened in the afternoon?”

Nod.

She nodded quietly.

It wasn't the first time she had shot an arrow towards a person, but a fight to the death with people was an entirely different matter.

Even if they were hunters, they were still people. Whether we liked them or not, killing them would bring a certain degree of trauma.

Even if everyone was pretending to be ok, I'm sure none of them were enjoying any sweet dreams tonight.

She just sat next to me as she silently pet Kelby. And then Kelby woke up, rubbing its eyes with its paws, and licked Yeonkyoung's palm. She made a small smile.

“Are you ok, party head?”

“Am I? I'm not feeling particularly happy...”

Of course I wasn't happy about killing anyone. I could still remember the face of the first person I had killed. He's even appeared in my dreams a few times.

But I also knew that if I kept thinking about that, it would only needlessly hold me back from what I needed to do.

“I keep thinking about it. If I close my eyes, it feels like all the people who died are watching me from somewhere in the dark. As if someone is staring whole into my back.”

“Try not to think about it. Ghosts can’t do anything.”

The burning bonfire created shadows in the dark.

I stole a glance to look at Yeonkyoung, and her expression was still all gloom and doom.

She was not suited for a harsh life like this.

She was forced into this life by her circumstances.

But no one here would take it easy on her for that reason. Because the weak get eaten.

“We will keep running into these kinds of situations. You know that right? Knowing that, will you be alright?”

“I’m preparing myself. But I’m still afraid. I’m afraid that I’ll get used to killing people.”

“There is no reason for you to be afraid of something that hasn’t happened yet. If you’re really afraid of that happening, then put an effort into preventing it from happening.”

“Effort?”

“Just get so strong that people won’t even try to fight against you.”

“What are you saying...”

“I’m serious.”

“Do you think I can get that strong?”

“How much did you save up?”

She thought about it for a minute before answering.

“About 200,000?”

“Oh, you saved up less than I expected.”

It was still a lot considering she’s only been saving for a few months, but I expected her to have saved more than that.

She should have had more than 300,000. What on earth did she use over 100,000 dollars on?

“I had some debts I had to take care of. They’re all paid off now though.”

“Well, once we’re done here, consider upgrading your equipment. There’s only so much you can grow relying only on dropped items.”

“What do you think I should get?”

She scooted closer to me and asked.

I kept looking at her breasts. I told myself to look away and answered.

“There was something I had in mind – the Athena bow. But it’s 2 million dollars.”

“That’s too expensive.”

“There’s a way to get a hold of it for a cheaper price. All I need is an ore called the elnite.”

“I’ve never seen that ore before.”

“Because it only drops from a level 3 monster.”

“But there aren’t any level 3 monsters here.”

“I have a feeling they’ll appear soon enough.”

“Really?”

Bae Yeonkyoung gave me a puzzled look.

The monsters on this new land were the level 1 and level 2 monsters that had disappeared when the dungeons had disappeared.

If I raised my proficiency and got rid of the level 3 dungeons, I was sure that the level 3 monsters would appear.

But hunting lower level monsters was still better for us. Until we ran out of monsters to hunt, I had no intention of bringing the level 3 monsters to this new land.



# Chapter 78

---

And the next day, we started to hunting monsters in earnest.

The Southern Marsh definitely had more level 2 monsters than in the lands before it. The majority of them were included humanoid orks and lizardmen as well as beast types such as white wolves, grizzly bears, and giant bats.

The prevalence of beast type monsters was good news.

Stab!

[+200]

The white wolf died easily. All I had done was stab it in the rear with the Smash Sword, but it trembled a bit as if hit by an electric shock before dying.

High level weapons are amazing, indeed.

Sooah, who had been supporting the long range attackers, asked.

“Sunbeh Oppa, that sword is crazy good huh?”

“Hell yes. Why else would it be a level 4 item?”

This is what I said, but I was honestly surprised at its power too.

I thought the level 3 Honcheon sword was plenty powerful. But killing a level 2 monster with required a bit of effort on my part. I wasn't able to kill a monster in one blow as I was able with this weapon.

“Party head!”

“I'm coming.”

Cho Youngoo was hollering loudly. He had about 10 or so wolves surrounding him.

The wolf is a relatively clever monster. And the white wolves were the same. They preferred to separate a straggler from a group and surround their prey before attacking.

We had used this bit of knowledge to our advantage by having Cho Youngoo stay a bit further away from the rest of us.

We were up against 30 of them in all.

And while  $\frac{1}{3}$  of them had surrounded Cho Youngoo, Jong Sawon and I started to attack them.

Slice!

[+200]

Stab!

[+200]

As soon as I felt the blade of my Smash sword hit its target, I didn't have any need to check if it had done its job. The sword finished off every monster it touched.

And I had done away with 3 wolves in mere moments in that manner. Moving so fast I was leaving an afterimage, the wolves were dying one after one helplessly. They didn't have a chance.

Seeing this, the rest of them began to avoid me and headed towards Sooah and the archers.

“Five of them! Can you handle it?”

“Yes! Leave it to me!”

Sooah yelled aloud. She was currently borrowing my reflexes with her new item.

Combined with the garter belt that raised her power by 30%, my borrowed reflexes, and the level 3 no name sword, she was well equipped to handle the level 2 white wolves.

Manager Kim asked.

“I can trust you right?”

“Manager. You’re more chicken than you look. Don’t you remember how you lived because of me last time?”

“But Jong Sawon was there that time.”

“I’m probably stronger than him right now.”

Sooah said with a bit of a confident swagger.

A staggering 300% in reflexes. No matter how flawed its design was, if it were me, I’d never pass that off to someone else.

Sooah slashed out with her sword as quick as lightning. She had learned to hold a sword with both hands from me, and the bastard sword was suited for this style.

Slice!

Upon striking, the wolf’s side split out, spilling out blood and guts.

She didn’t bat an eye and just moved on to the next one.

Han Joonseok and Bae Yeonkyoung stuck right behind her and continued shooting their bows while Park Hanbum used his moving shots atop his bike.

And Kelby.

Gnash!

Kelby chomped ferociously on a wolf's neck, immediately snapping it. Then Kelby immediately chased after the next wolf.

The white wolves were busy trying to run away from Kelby while Kelby was rounding them up so that Jong Sawon and I could cut them all down.

It would probably look like we were fighting blindly to an outside observer.

But this was all planned and coordinated beforehand.

Of course there were little deviations here and there, but the core of it all happened as we expected it to.

“It seems everyone has powered up significantly. Thanks to that I can rest peacefully.”

Manager Kim yelled out. After Sooah took up the sword, he had become the only non-combat member of the party.

It may seem that he was just hanging out while we were doing all the work...but that wasn't entirely true. There was 7 wolves fast asleep. He had done his part.

Though it was all thanks to his items, but the same went for every one of us.

And we had continued hunting in this way for a week straight.

I don't know if it was because we were lucky, but we never once crossed paths with the Ezekiel Team in that time.

We had earned a total of 600 ores and 40 items. As for reward points, I earned 60,000 of those.

All the items that dropped from the monsters were pretty much Level 1 and Level 2 items, but I could use these towards item fusion.

I ended up fusing together the Level 2 Ingot sword that Cho Youngoo had with a Level 1 Agile sword to create the Rubicon sword. He was now armed with level 3 equipment.

Then I used up all the blisolnites to fuse level 1 items into level 2 items so that we could sell and earn more money in that way.

The most disappointing aspect was that all the items were from

the old system.

It seemed that new system items only dropped from irregulars or hunters.

The former was not something we could laugh at while the latter was something I hoped didn't happen often.

But I wanted to be able to fuse the new system items.

But since it was so hard to come across new system items, it was hard for me to do it.

If I could even just fuse and create Sooah's Redemption necklace, I could boost up all of my party members' abilities in an instant.

Of course it still had the design flaw. But if I could just get my hands on the needed items to perform the fusion, I would make wearing them mandatory.

There was probably no other item as efficient as this in bringing up a person's abilities. Even Sooah, on wearing the item and copying my reflexes, she was able to become even more powerful than both Jong Sawon and Cho Youngoo.

Not having any injuries the entire week of hunting was largely thanks to her help.

Hic Hic Hic-

A weird sound started chugging from ChoYoungoo's car.

"I think it's about time due for maintenance."

"We only rode it around for a week, and it's already breaking down?"

At Sooah's question, Cho Youngoo calmly responded.

"Even if they say 4 wheel drive, there is no such thing as the perfect offroading vehicle. The only vehicles that could survive this kind of beating are those only available to the army or something ok?"

"Do you mean humvees?"

Han Joonseok asked. He was someone who knew a little bit of this and that. It wasn't surprising that he knew about military grade vehicles.

"No, they have something more suited for us in the form of a truck. You've seen them around here remember?"

"Ah, you mean those trucks covered with tarpaulin?"



“Yep. You can stow maybe 20 people in the back and it can also carry a lot of our equipment. And you can even modify it so that people can sleep in there too. It looks a bit bulky on the outside but it’s the best vehicle for offroading.”

“How much does something like that cost?”

I asked. Buying a car or two isn’t a problem if we just hunted for a day or two and sold the items.

“They run up to about 30,000 dollars. They’re a bit on the expensive side but it comes with alot of options just for hunters.”

“Would we be able to make the purchase at Manripo?”

They did have a autobody shop, but I didn’t remember seeing a dealership.

“Even if we can’t immediately, we should be able to soon. Because vehicles are as useful as having two feet in the new land. There is no way that car dealers would not jump at such a great opportunity.”

Han Joonseok responded.

“Hm. Then let’s head back. We’re almost out of supplies and the car is having issues so that would be best.”

We were planning to finish up our hunting through the end of day anyway. Instead of continuing our hunt and getting stranded, it was better to return to Manripo.

\*\*\*

After leaving the Southern Marshes and returning to the entry point, we saw that a bunch of new temporary shops and buildings had been set up in the span of a week.

They were all in the form of modular buildings. Additionally, we saw long stretches of roads had been paved. It was amazing how fast things changed in such a short time.

The main reason for paving the roads was to ward off monsters.

“It looks like we don’t even have to go all the way to Manripo.”

Cho Youngoo whistled and said. I nodded my head in agreement.

Just the parked cars alone numbered over several hundred. There weren’t any civilian vehicles – most of them were 4 wheel drive trucks. There were quite a few motorcycles as well.

“It looks like they moved all the buildings from Manripo to here.”

Han Joonseok said after examining the many buildings. When we

got closer, we saw a sign that said The Yellow Sea of the West Sea.

It looked like they had already named this bustling city as well. It was probably not something done officially but, more likely than not, just hurriedly put together and posted up.

They probably did this in an effort to label the land as Korea's amidst the rising tension with China.

We drove in and parked our vehicle. It didn't take long for us to find a hostel. The city was organized in groups to make finding everything easier. There were even policemen patrolling around the alleys carrying firearms.

“Wow, pretty scary. Do they have to walk around like that?”

Cho Youngoo asked.

“Of course. Hunters are basically human weapons. If there aren't policemen around, fights would just break out everywhere.”

“Still.”

“I bet the police force is stretched thin because they're forced to come here.”

I said as I looked around. The West Sea had appeared out of nowhere so it was likely they were using personnel who should be

devoted elsewhere.

\*\*\*

“Hm....”

My throat was parched. Manager Kim had forced me to drink yet again last night and half the night was a blank.

“Euum...”

I tried to get up to get some water, but my body was very heavy.

I forced my sleepy eyes to open, and I saw a head on top of my body.

Sooah had fallen asleep using me as a pillow.

I placed her head onto the floor and slowly got up.

Squeak.

“Ah....”

Yeonkyoung, who was coming out of the shower, briefly locked eyes with me. She wasn't wearing a bathrobe, but she had on a white tshirt and shorts. I could slightly see through the areas that

were wet from her hair.

Jeez.

I stopped my eyes from trying to glance at areas I shouldn't and spoke.

“You're up early.”

“Ah...so are you.”

“Uh...but why was I sleeping here?”

We had checked into two rooms. One was for the men, and one for the women. Since the rooms were large, there was no reason for me to have slept here.

“Unnie was a bit drunk and carried you here.”

“Is that so....”

I turned around to look at Sooah. It looked like she was awake too – she was rubbing her eyes and staring at us.

Then, surprised, she covered her face with her blanket.

“Huh? Don't look. My face is probably swollen all to hell.”

I've already seen you like that plenty of times. What does covering it now do?

"But what are you doing here so early?"

"From what I hear, you carried me here."

"Hm...I guess I did it out of habit."

Out of all of us, I had the lowest tolerance for alcohol.

And it was Sooah's job to carry me home because she was the only one physically capable of doing so.

Since no one had to go home yesterday, in her drunken state, she seemed to have done what she always did...except dropped me off at her and Yeonkyoung's room.

# Chapter 79

---

“I tried to stop her but she was too strong so...”

“Well. Makes sense.”

Since porters have to be extremely strong to carry around the hefty backpacks, I’m sure that Yeonkyoung wouldn’t have been able to push Sooah back even a little. On top of that, Sooah had the garter – meaning I was probably the only one on our team who could rival her in sheer strength.

“And then after she put you down on the floor, she immediately passed out.”

“Did I do anything ‘bad’?”

Sooah asked with puppy dog eyes.

“No. You just fell right to sleep.”

“Darn. I can’t believe I missed such a great opportunity.”

“Hey hey. What on earth is going through that head of yours?”

“Well we were both super drunk anyway. Whatever I might have done, it wouldn’t have hurt any of our honor since we wouldn’t have remembered it.”

“Alright alright anyway. Let’s go eat. I’ll go and wake everyone else up.”

“Ah, everyone already went out for the day.”

Yeonkyoung responded.

“Hm? Where?”

I was surprised they were able to get up and about so early after drinking so hard last night.

“They said they were going to check out an autobody shop and a dealership. Ah. Manager Kim is still here though. He’s probably still asleep. As the other three left, they said not to wake him.”

“That old man. Then let’s just go eat by ourselves. We can drop by the hunter market on the way.”

“Oh, you want to sell some items?”

“Well. We need to sell them quickly before the value drops any more.”

Even now, items were flooding the West Sea. At this rate, the price of items will keep dropping.



“Just wait five minutes. I’ll hurry and wash so we can leave.”

Sooah jumped up from where she was laying.

“Hearing that we’re going to make money woke you right up did it?”

“Of course! Money is the best! I’d say it’s something like my life goal?”

“Alright enough money talk. Just hurry up and get washed so we can leave.”

“Yes, owner!”

“Stop. Don’t do that.”

I just got the chills.

The hunter market was on the other side of the city. Saying it like this made it seem really far, but it was only about a 10 minute walk.

“Heuung~”

Sooah’s footsteps were light.

She then turned her head and said.

“How much do you think we’ll get?”

“A whole lot.”

I couldn’t make a more accurate estimate. The price of items were ever changing, and there was a high chance that the value of items had dropped from our last time here.

On top of that, the market took a 10% commission off the sale of items.

Luckily though, the value of a used and new item were the same because it didn’t change the quality or ability of the item either way.

As we left the rest area with hostels, we entered the commercial area. This was a place where hunters, who put their lives on the line, spent their money without restraints.

The buildings themselves were prefabricated modules, but the food and alcohol being sold within were on the expensive side.

But that wasn’t to say there weren’t any restaurants serving more affordable fare. This was where the hunters who were just starting out at the West Sea came to eat.

“Should we eat first?”

“No. I don’t think I can eat a bite just yet.”

Sooah shook her head. I guess she was really curious just how much we earned. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t either.

As soon as we came to the market, we saw several dozens of people waiting in line.

As there were many expensive items on sale, there were just a ton of guards on duty. Though they weren’t hunters, they were equipped with weapons like stun guns.

Additionally, the market was right next to the police station. Security was high.

“Oh? I’m surprised to meet you someplace like this.”

A woman officer looked at me and said.

I lightly nodded and looked down. Sooah jabbed me in my said and asked.

“Who is this?”

“You don’t remember?”

“Mm...I don’t think so. It’s not as if I’d have any business with a cop...ah, wait. Are you that cop from last time?”

“Uh. Lieutenant Sohn Aram, right?”

She was the officer who had checked to see if I had a skill that time we got into a bit of a scuffle with the highschoolers on the playground.

I started wondering why she was stationed all the way out here when she seemed to be higher up in the ranks.

She looked at me in surprise.

“You remembered my name, even?”

“Well, I have pretty good memory so...”

Of course this was a lie. I only remembered her name because she was a beauty.

“But why are you all the way out here?”

“Everyone hunter-related has been stationed out here. Since there are so many hunters coming out here, there really isn’t a

reason for us to be back at home. But why are you here at the hunter market?”

“Aren’t there only two reasons a person would be out at the hunter market?”

“So which is yours?”

“Both. We’re here to sell some items, as well as buy some things that might be of use.”

“Wow, it seems you’ve done pretty well.”

“You could say luck was on our side.”

“Lieutenant Sohn!”

At that moment, we heard a voice calling out to her. Her eyes had turned into crescent moons.

Was she the type to smile easily? Her image was a bit different from when I met her at the Mapo Police Station.

“Then I’ll be going in. Don’t get into any trouble.”

“Well, you never know what will happen.”

I said as I shrugged my shoulders. As I watched her walk away, I felt someone burning holes in my back.

When I looked back, I saw that Sooah was not happy at all. She was biting her lip. Hard.

“Do you like her?”

“No, this is only the second time I’ve met her. What are you talking about?”

“I could see the way she kept smiling at you. She’s a complete fox. That girl.”

“An officer was just being polite to a civilian.”

“Definitely not. Ask Yeonkyoung.”

She poked Yeonkyoung side.

“Right?”

“Probably....”

“See. Yeonkyoung agrees with me.”

“Stop spouting nonsense. Let’s go sell some items.”

“If you don’t take care, she’ll swallow you whole.”

“Then I’ll be thankful.”

“Huh? Are you serious?”

“Someone like Lieutenant Sohn Aram is beautiful and she looks like she has a very pleasant personality. There’s no way I’d say no.”

“How can you...”

“And above all, she looks really good in uniform.”

“Party head. So you’re that kind of person.”

Yeonkyoung said.

Hm, it was a joke. Maybe I took it a bit too far?

I thought about taking it back, but decided not to.

Sooah started furiously pounding into her smartphone.

“What are you doing now?”

“None of your business.”

I knew she was probably doing something unreasonable again, but I just let her be. She’s a grown woman.

It was only after about 30 minutes later that it was finally our turn.

We went into a small room that was prepped for us inside the the market.

This was to prevent others from seeing what items are purchased and sold.

Theft between hunters was quite high. It was never a good idea to show others what you had.

Now that we had a lot of items in our possession, it was better to perform transactions in a separate room like this.

Tap.

Inside the small room was a wide table.

On the opposite side of the room was a large closet. It would seem that if we put an item in there, someone else on the other side would take it.



“How many items have you brought? If you put them atop this table, I will inspect them, and then give you the total price.”

The male worker said haughtily as if this were a nuisance.

Most market workers were very polite. Was he unhappy that he had to be all the way out here?

I leaned against the table and spoke.

“I kind of have a lot. Is that ok?”

“Our branch inventories several hundreds of items. If we included skills, we have that much more. No matter how many items you have brought, we would be able to afford it. Also...it doesn't seem as if you brought that many items...from what I could tell.”

He responded after glancing at me and my two party members.

I didn't bring any of my equipment here. The equipment that Sooah and Yeonkyoung had brought weren't for sale, but for protection purposes.

“What you see isn't all we have.”

“If there's someone waiting outside, then can you have them step

in? We're a bit busy so..."

"We noticed you did have a long line."

"We've been here for 3 hours without a break. So..."

He was probably trying to tell me to stop wasting his time. Well, I agree with him on that.

Though I didn't like his attitude, there was no reason for me to keep dawdling.

"Alright then..."

I raised my hand into the air. The worker, who had been looking at me quizzically one second, was staring big Os at me in the next.

Slam! Clam!

What had been just air a moment ago was now spilling out with items galore. Items were piling over on the table and on the floor.

"This....this is...?"

Though he was a worker for a very popular branch, it seems he's never experienced something like this before.

“There are 37 in all.”

There were originally 40, but I had taken 6 of them to fuse them into 3 level 2 items.

Though this reduced the total number of items, the value of all of them should have gone up by alot.

“This...where did all this...”

“I don’t think that’s what is important right now.”

“Ah. Yes, certainly. Can you please step out for a moment and wait on stand by? It will take some time for me to inspect them all.”

He gave me a deep bow. As we walked out to where he had pointed to us, we were led to a room with VIP written on the door.

The room had a large sofa with drinks available to us. Since the room hadn’t looked big from the outside, we didn’t even imagine there would be an inner room like this.

“This is why people need to earn alot of money.”

Sooah sucked on her cocktail in large gulped as she twittered on.

“You will become something someday alright.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“Then did you think it was a compliment?”

“Do you know that you’ve been really mean to me recently?”

“Then have you done anything to warrant any compliments?”

Sooah pouted.

“If I think about it, I haven’t really done anything compliment worthy either.”

Yeonkyoung whispered.

I pondered on what she just said. So is she asking me to be mean to her too?

“Since you’re working hard, it’s fine.”

“Ok...”

The only reason I was talking like this to Sooah was because she was the type to bounce back real quick. But Yeonkyoung was sensitive. I needed to be careful what I said to her.

Sock.

Sooah punched me in the side.

“Hey. What are you doing?”

“Oops. It slipped.”

“Wouldn’t people usually pinch or something?”

“But a fist hurts more.”

“Is that right...”

This was true but...this girl. Well, I gave her a light flick on the forehead right back.

“Ahhhk!”

A nice sound rung out as her head rebounded back. Did I do it too hard?

# Chapter 80

---

Sooah pointed to her red forehead and yelled out.

“You know that this hurts like crazy?”

“Well now we’re even.”

I lifted my shirt to point at the bruise that was already appearing on my side.

Wait. Why is she taking out her phone?

Snap.

“What are you doing...?”

“Taking picture of a rare sight.”

“If you don’t erase it right now, I’m going to smash your phone.”

“But it’s a 3,000 dollar phone.”

“Heuk...”

Expensive. What kind of phone is 3,000 dollars.

Bae Yeonkyoung spoke.

“You guys are really cute together.”

“Huh? This is cute?”

Sooah moaned while pointed to her swollen forehead.

“But the only person party head jokes around with is unnie. He’s very polite to everyone else.”

“Hm? Is that right? So I was special this whole time?”

Sooah whispered with wide eyes before turning to face me.

She looked like she was expecting something.

“I do it because she’s easy to make fun of.”

“See? See?”

“He’s probably only saying that because he’s shy.”

“So that was it....see, I didn’t know this so I was getting a bit down.”

Oh my. Looks like there's some kind of huge misunderstanding here. But since she seemed to calm down a bit, I just kept quiet.

Honestly, I did flick her a bit too hard.

"9.7 million dollars."

"...how much?"

"Nine million seven hundred thousand dollars."

"No. I wasn't asking you to say it more slowly. Nevermind."

You're being too polite now. Isn't this an almost complete 360 from how you were acting just a second ago?

It's not as if there's any incentive for you if I sell you a lot of my items.

But it was the sad and honest truth that the weak naturally bow down to the strong.

Sooah clamped her hand on mine and said.

"Sunbeh oppa. Do you want to..."



“Nope.”

“Haaa. You rejected me before I could even propose!”

Yeonkyoung started to laugh out loud. This was the first time I’d ever heard her laugh like that.

Back at the hostel, we waited for everyone to return.

In the end, we had decided to give each person on the team 1 million dollars while I reserved 2.7 million for myself.

It took quite a bit of time to decide on the split.

I had wanted to give my party members more of the split, but they refused and forced me to take more.

It wasn’t because I was selfless – I just had different goals for everyone.

My goal was for everyone to get even stronger and raise the power of the team, but they were hoping that I would take the money and not have any thoughts of leaving the team.

Ultimately, we decided that this split was the perfect ratio fair for all sides.

The only person who took less was Park Hanbum, who owed the remaining 200,000 for the Grassland Horn Bow – he received 800,000 instead.

“Amazing.”

Park Hanbum said as he checked his account. Since he had hunted solo until now, this must have been his first time earning as much as this.

“How much were you earning before?”

“Well there isn’t even much of a before. Because I wasn’t able to hunt for more than a few days since I came to the Yellow Sea. I did pick up one item, but it was only a level 1 so it’s embarrassing to compare the price to this.”

That still meant he had earned 100,000 on his own – which isn’t a laughing matter.

But that was only because he hadn’t been injured.

Of course it’s not as if we never sustain any injuries during hunts.

Luckily we had the healing potions on hand to treat them immediately.

We had about 8 bottles left.

“What are you doing?”

Sooah stared at her smartphone with a look of distress. I thought she would be overjoyed with the money, but did she have a problem?

“I don’t know if I should put this money into the bank and earn interest off it or invest it into stocks.”

“If it’s something like that, there’s no reason for you to stress out.”

“What should I do??”

“We’re hunters. Since you’re a hunter, you need to spend like a hunter.”

I said happily.

This wasn’t something I was just saying to Sooah – I was saying this to the benefit of everyone else.

“I will leave equipment purchases up to you guys. But I am hoping you will not let your money just sit somewhere.”

You can only earn 1-2% interest at the bank while stocks are unreliable.

But even if you purchased an item right now, used or new, you could always sell it again.

So the smartest thing to do would be to purchase equipment to allow you to be a better hunter. Then, instead of a measly 1-2%, you could earn several hundred times more return on your investment.

“What do we do when the price of the items drop later?”

Manager Kim asked.

“We checked at the market, and it seemed there wasn’t much of a value drop in items. I thought the surge in items would surely hurt their value, but because dungeons had disappeared all over the world, there wasn’t much of a change in the overall number of items – there are just more concentrations of them in the new lands.”

“Well, I was just asking because I was curious. I was going to use this money on new equipment anyway.”

“This is not something I am forcing anyone to do.”

“If you try and persuade us and then tell us you’re not forcing us to do it...”

“Haha...sorry.”

I laughed sheepishly. It's too bad if they thought I was forcing them. Because life was more important than money. Better equipment could mean the difference between life and death.

Since I can't always save everyone, they needed to hone their craft and upgrade their equipment so that they could take care of themselves when it mattered.

I looked at Cho Youngoo and said.

“Oh yeah, so what happened with the car?”

“There was a garage. They said they would have it fixed up by tomorrow.”

“Oh. Faster than I expected.”

“They said that they expected this exponential growth so they had hired more staff.”

While everyone went shopping for equipment, I remained behind at the hostel.

“Aren't you going to buy anything Sunbeh Oppa?”

“I’m still thinking about it. Aren’t you going?”

“I’m looking up items right now.”

She raised her phone and showed me. It was the market items listing.

Though expensive, I couldn’t deny that it was useful. I thought to myself that maybe I should make a purchase as well.

The market here already has a smartphone store, so I could buy it whenever I wanted.

Anyway, what to buy next.

I had a total of 3.5 million dollars in my account. I could afford a Level 5 item with this much.

With several thousands of items stored in memory, I started to think back on all of them.

Thinking of all the items that I couldn’t have even dreamed of purchasing a few months ago, I slowly began to smile without even realizing it.

What to buy? What to buy?

3 million dollar Impact Hammer? 3.5 million dollar Oil-based Armor? Oh should I save a bit more and buy the 4 million dollar Golden Warrior Armor?

Click.

Sooah turned on the TV.

After scrolling through a bunch of channels, she stopped at a news program. They were covering a story related to the Yellow Sea.

A reporter, with Manripo in the background, started to speak.

-[A new city has been established at the Yellow Sea, where hunters are coming here in droves. Compared to the number of people from just last week, the count seems to have almost doubled. And new buildings are popping up every minute of the day.]

Then there was a scene of trucks lined up to enter the city.

The news that the monsters didn't regenerate had spread.

After confirming that there were indeed only low level monsters, everyone headed for the new land.

-[But there is also a dark shadow looming over the West Sea. It is

said that there are over 200 hunters that have already passed here in the new land.]

200....less than I expected.

Among them, only some probably died while fighting against monsters.

Most monsters, who ate humans for food, would probably leave no evidence of their meal.

But if it was a human who had killed their fellow man, it's not as if they would bury the dead bodies.

-[The mortality rate is based on the number of hunters whose families could not reach them in over a week. But if we were to include the count of hunters who have been missing for even just 3-4 days, the number would increase to over a thousand. Even in dire times such as this, the police have been pushing off investigation – saying the blame is most likely on the monsters.]

Then the scene switched off.

“Uh?”

Sooah said with surprise.

It was Lieutenant Sohn Aram. There was only one reason for



someone unrelated to this issue to be speaking.

The police needed a scapegoat. So why not give the public someone beautiful.

-[Currently there is not enough evidence to warrant a formal investigation. Just keeping the peace in the West Sea is taking up considerable police resources. Additionally, this new land is as big as our entire Country. Asking us to investigate every incident in such a wide area is improbable and impractical.]

After that, the reporter ended the broadcast with a few comments on the ignorance and inaction of the police.

That was definitely unfair. Even from what I could see, this wasn't something that the police could do anything about. They just wanted to crucify someone and call it a news piece.

"That's too much. They definitely don't have enough police here to launch a full investigation and keep the piece like Ms. Sohn said. And it's not as if they could transplant the entire Country's force here to do so."

"That's true."

Yeonkyoung, who had been peeling an orange on the floor, answered. Hm. So this one didn't go to the market either huh?

The three of us went back to the market and each purchased an

item of our liking.

The more expensive an item was, the better it was. It was better to buy one expensive item, than to buy several modestly priced items – that was the general rule of thumb.

After pondering for a bit, I chose the most expensive item.

Toyul Hammer (5): The power of lightning is asleep. You can hit the ground with the hammer to strike at your opponent. Damage and range is dependant on the wielder's strength.

A level 5 weapon, the Toyul Hammer.

At 4.5 million dollars, I sold the Honcheon sword to make up for the difference.

Since I could only wield one weapon in each hand, there was no reason for me to hold onto a level 3 sword any longer.

I was a bit sad to part with something that had come such a long way with me.

I considered maybe keeping it to use for a fusion in the future, but since I didn't see it in the Fusion book for something worth making, I closed my eyes and sold it.

I was most pleased with my purchase, however. Since it adapted

to the wielder's power just as the Honcheon sword did, it was just perfect for me.

“Wow....that looks incredibly barbaric.”

Sooah, who was pretty barbaric herself, calling the hammer barbaric was a testament to how big and cumbersome looking my new weapon was.

# Chapter 81

---

From its outward appearance, it looked more like a sledgehammer than a warhammer. Instead of a battle weapon, it looked more like a tool used to demolish buildings.

This hammer weighed over 50 kilograms. It was not a weapon that anyone would be able to wield, let alone pick up easily.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

I picked it up and started to swing with it back and forth in one hand.

Flash.

A small electrical spark leapt out.

It seems that the electrical damage was proportionate to the amount of force used to strike the poor guy hit by this barbaric weapon.

It was a heavy thing. I had been able to wield the Honcheon sword, which was heavy in its own right, as if I were swinging around a feather. It would be difficult to do the same with this item.

I guess that would be the trade off – harder to wield, but able to

deal more damage at a time.

Yeonkyoung, taking my advice, purchased a Level 3 Valladolid Horn Bow.

It was a 1.1 million dollar weapon that didn't require any arrows to use.

Since it didn't have to be reloaded each time, this was the best suited weapon for our archer whose specialty was in rapid firing.

She paid for the difference in the cost of the weapon by selling her old bow.

It was Sooah's purchase that took me by surprise.

"Are you seriously going to buy this?"

"Yeh. Why not? Isn't it a good weapon?"

"Well....I'm not saying it's bad."

She had chosen a Level 3 Arachne leather armor. An armor that wrapped around the entire body, while it served its purpose in protecting the wearer, it was also a bit risque.

I'm not saying she was exposed anywhere. But the leather was

designed to hug every curve.

Whether or not she had a nice figure, I would feel embarrassed to look at her were she to put it on.

But other than that one small issue, the armor had a number of very nice options.

First, it had great ventilation. Even if she were to wear just the armor all day for a month, she would remain both comfortable and odor free. You could basically think of the armor as a second skin.

Since the armor was also very elastic, it didn't give too much trouble when putting it on and taking it off.

But the best part of the armor was that you could shoot webs from it.

I think I remember an American comicbook hero being able to do something similar.

There were two main purposes for these cobwebs.

1. Rendering your opponent immobile or limiting mobility
2. Protecting your ally from other attacks.

“Did you buy that so you can wear it for Manager Kim?”

“Yep. I’m sick of hearing him muttering in the back while we fight so I’m buying it to maybe shut him up.”

“Hm....I don’t know if that would shut him up.”

“What does it matter. Then I can just shoot some webs at him. There.”

She made a small evil smile. I guess it wouldn’t really matter if she cocooned him in some cobwebs since he didn’t do anything else the rest of the battle.

It would also help her since she could spend less of her energy protecting an extra body.

“So is everyone done shopping?”

Han Joonseok, who was walking toward us, said loudly. Since the only market in the new land was this one, it was no surprise that we would run into him.

“Yeh, pretty much. How about you?”

“Well.”

He raised up his new quiver. The item stats appeared via my manual.

Though it was an item I was already familiar with, it was different seeing it in person.

Explosion quiver (3): Gives the arrows stored in the quiver the ability to explode on impact.

“Not bad.”

It was a clever choice. The only real weapon Han Joonseok had was the level 2 stalker.

In order to close the widening gap between the other members, instead of choosing another weapon, he chose a new quiver that would boost the attack power of his current weapon.

Everyone else had also chosen and purchased level 3 items as well.

In order to raise his defense, Cho Youngoo purchased a level 4 no name plated armor.

It didn't have any special options, but it would serve its main purpose just fine.

Jong Sawon brought an Ingot sword and the Level 1 agility sword.



These were the item ingredients to fuse and create a Rubicon sword. We had 10 ansilites left. This meant we had enough to create a level 3 item.

“Would this suffice for a fusion?”

“Yes, not a problem.”

It seemed he wanted to use two swords like I did.

Imagining him killing monsters left and right with a rubicon sword in both hands made me feel a bit sorry for the little guys.

“But do you think you’ll have enough strength to fight with both swords?”

The Rubicon sword is supposed to be wielded in both hands. Although it wasn’t a rule but, unlike the bastard or longsword, if you don’t attack with enough force you lose the full benefit of the weapon.

“That’s why I bought another item.”

Jong Sawon shrugged his shoulder as he raised his glove.

I thought it was familiar, until I recognized that it was the level 3 Power Glove. Wearing both as a set increases the wearer’s power by 50%.

With that on, it would be no problem for him to wield both swords.

Park Hanbum had purchased a level 3 Basilisk leather armor. This armor was to protect against sword attacks.

It was something unnecessary for fighting monsters. But we had already run into trouble with hunters that time before, and we were sure to run into trouble with them again.

Finally, Manager Kim had ended up purchasing the most interesting item. It was a level 4 flashing ring. The ring had a 30 second cool time and gave the wearer the ability to move instantly to another location in a 10 meter radius. This was an item that was difficult to use when trying to be stealthy or hidden because of the bright flashing light that shines out on use. But it was perfect to escape a dangerous situation.

Me: Toyul Hammer (5, Range attack), Smash sword (4, 100% damage), Bloodysword (2, Blood absorption), Plated armor (3), Longsword (1)

Jung sooah: Bastard sword (3), Agility sword (1, increase reflex by 15%), Chongmal Garter Belt (1, increase strength by 30%), Backpack (1, decreases weight of items by 30%), Redemption Necklace (3, copycat ally's item), Archne Leather Armor (3, cobwebs)

Bae Yeonkyoung: Valladolid Horn Bow (3, attack even without arrows), Leather armor (2)

Cho Youngoo: Rubicon Sword (3), No name steel shield (3), Plated armor (4), Strider's Red Boots (1, Increase speed by 30%)

Han Joonseok: Stalker (2, perfect aim), leather armor (2), Optical Ruby Ring (1, enhances vision and enables night vision), Explosive quiver (3, give explosive attack power to arrows)

Jong Sawon: Rubicon sword (3), Agility leather armor (2, Increases reflexes by 30%), Power Glove (3, Increases strength by 50%)

Kim SoonKeun (Manager Kim): Professional Cane (3, Increases level by 1), Amplification Cane (2, Increases chances of spells working by 30%), Floodplain Cane (2, Can adjust range of attack), Robe (2, temperature control), Selfish glove (1, increase drop probability by 10%)

Park Hanbum: Grassland Horn Bow (3, Moving Shot), Basilisk leather armor (3), Leather Boots (2), Mockingbird Feather (2, Stealth)

# Chapter 82

---

We were armed to the teeth. Since we could keep adding more and more weapons and gear to our arsenal, there was a good chance that we would keep adding things to our collection with time.

At the same times, items that boost the same ability do not work together. Instead, the effects of the higher level item is shown. So there is that.

For example, if you have a ring that boosts power by 30% and another ring that boost power by 50%, the latter boost will be the only boost you see.

Circling back to what I mentioned before, it is better to have one quality item than several low quality items. For this reason, most hunters will sell their lower level items and graduate to a higher level item instead.

But there are some special cases where low level items could come in handy too.

Right now, because we know the level of the monsters, it is more advantageous to have 2 level 4 items instead of 1 level 5 item. Because with 2 items, you can use one towards defense and the other against offense.

The next day, we went to pick up the truck we had purchased from the dealer. This new truck even had enough space for Park

Hanbum's bike, so he was actually the most excited.

This truck, designed specifically for hunters, was designed a bit different than normal vehicles.

With its standard 4 wheel drive capability, it also came with steel plates that protected the wheels from monster attacks.

The bulletproof glass on all the windows should make it sturdier against monster attacks.

The seats were also customizable. When the vehicle was not in use, the seats could be moved to create a makeshift bed.

The top of the vehicle also had a solar panel. Though it wasn't a lot of power, it could still make some kind of energy output.

Anyway, the vehicle had been modified to be able to keep up with our hunting for at least over a month. And the price came out to more than we had expected – 80,000 dollars.

Though it was way more expensive than the 30,000 we had guessed, I felt like it was a worthy investment. It's not as if we were lacking for money or anything.

After taking care of all the finishing touches, we all got into the truck.

Cho Youngoo climbed into the driver's seat and, to keep him company, Han Joonseok rode in the passenger seat. The front seat were connected to the back, so moving around from the front to back was not a problem.

“There are more people than monsters huh.”

Sooah spoke as she opened the window and looked outside.

After returning to the Southern Marsh, we saw that there was indeed a sharp decline in monsters already.

We were in the Yellow Sea City for just two days. Things shouldn't have changed so drastically in that short time.

But since level 1 and level 2 hunters could only come here to hunt, it was understandable.

Most could travel on the Southern Marsh to get to other parts of the new land, but it was too much trouble for low level hunters to hunt far away.

“I think we might need to go further in.”

There should still be monsters lurking somewhere. We just needed to look for them. And it was probably better to look for them where there aren't too many hunters already gather.

“Should we just leave the marsh and go beyond here?”

Han Joonseok asked.

There were only two paths we could take from here. Further south or move west. But in the west, there was the danger of running into Chinese hunters.

“Based on the announcement, the south side has not been claimed yet. All the famous raid teams have moved towards the north and west.”

The top 5 raid teams of Korea were: Mercenary, Galaxy, SA, Immortals, Tiger, and the Professionals.

Among them, Galaxy and SA were endorsed by major corporations while the Professionals was endorsed by the country's Department of Defense.

You could think of the Professionals as the raid team that hunters go to serve military duty.

Mercenary, Immortals, and Tigers were independent teams like us.

And all five raid teams were now in the new land.

But since they were all hunting in the north and west, they had

probably closed off the roads in that direction.

At first, I had assumed that all five teams just happened to congregate in that area.

But while we were at the Yellow Sea City, we confirmed that the area those teams were stationed in were assigned to them by the government.

Seeing this, Ezekiel had tried to copy those other teams.

Of course they didn't have the government's consent to do so as the other teams did, but that was too bad.

"We can't go north. Let's just continue to plow through the marsh and keep going south. Since it will have a lot of forests, it will be more dangerous than here, but we should be fine since they are all low level monsters anyway."

"It will take us about 10 hours to get there. Why don't you take a break in the meantime and take a nap."

The truck traveled at a leisurely 30km/hr speed. If we were able to go straight, it would have taken a much shorter time, but there weren't any proper roads so we had to take a roundabout trail.

We made a stop where the marshes ended. There was a large river blocking our path.



“Hm. What do we do about this? I don’t think the truck can pass through this way.”

Cho Youngoo asked while scratching his head.

We all got out of the truck, checked to make sure it was safe, then sat down to take a meal break.

Since we had been cooped up in the truck for almost 10 hours, everyone started to stretch and get all the kinks out.

Sooah, whose eyes were swollen from just waking up, said.

“Isn’t there like a bridge or something somewhere?”

“How could there be when this is brand new land?”

“Hm. I’ll go check how deep it is and come back.”

“Just by looking, I could tell it’s several meters deep. Do you even know how to swim?”

“Hey, I was the ace swimmer at my neighborhood swimming pool.”

“Is there any sport you can’t do?”

Sooah threw off the robe she had on in dramatic fashion.

“Oooh....”

A weird sound escaped out of Cho Youngoo’s mouth. The shiny black leather of the Arachne armor clung to Sooah’s bodyline.

She didn’t have curves like Yeonkyoung, but she was fit enough that it would definitely turn heads.

“Here I go!”

Splash!

She jumped into the water. Since the armor acted like a second skin, there was no reason for her to take it off.

Basically, it just looked like a swimsuit that covered the entire body.

The river was about 30 meters wide.

Sooah came up for air after swimming all the way to the opposite site of the river.

“Ha, it’s not as deep as it seems. Most of the river is about as deep

as I'm tall while the deepest point is probably about 2 meters deep."

"Why don't you tend to the seaweed that you call hair first."

"It doesn't look like seaweed ok?"

She quickly tied her hair into a ponytail. My eyes naturally went to the now bare neck.

I could also see that everyone was looking at her...just as I was.

Even Bae Yeonkyoung was gawking.

She wasn't an obvious beauty but, with an athletic and proportionate body, she did have something about her that drew the eye.

I'll at least admit to that much.

This girl, if she was born as a guy, she would've been mighty popular with the girls.

\*\*\*

It would be too much to ask for to try and cross the river with the truck.

“What do we do then?”

Sooah asked. I’ve been pondering the same thing but there was no solution that jumped out at me. I could see the forest on the other side of the river.

Could we maybe chop some trees down and use those as a makeshift boat?

We had 3 rubicon swords in our party right now. If it was sharp enough to chop down monsters like pieces of paper, it could be just as easy to knock down a few trees.

Though the makeup of each tree is different depending on the type, most should have between 50-75% moisture.

If we used a 1 ton tree, we should be able to load about 300-500 kilograms on top of it.

So we would need about 10 tons of wood to be able to safely cross our truck over the river.

It wasn’t impossible. If we had the time, we could do a few trial and errors until we got it just right.

But if we had the time, we could just hunt somewhere else instead.

We needed some other method.

“Can’t we put the truck in that thing?”

Sooah asked.

She was probably referring to my manual. Except for the small fact that everyone thought storage was due to my effort skill rather than the glasses.

“The truck isn’t an item.”

“Ah. Oh yeah.”

“Let’s start out by doing some scouting around the area. You never know, there might be some spot where we can just drive through.”

I left the party members on stand by with the truck while I scouted one way and Park Hanbum scouted the opposite way on his bike.

I saw small clusters of monsters here and there. I considered maybe just hunting those monsters on the way, but decided against it. Finding a road was priority.

We could always come back and hunt these monsters if we

couldn't find a road.

So I continued scouting for about 5 km in this way. But no matter how far I went, I wasn't able to find any roads that the vehicle would be able to cross.

Unfortunately, the new land's terrain seemed to elevate the further north I went.

This river was probably flowing down from the higher elevation.

Ultimately, I had to turn back without any fruit from my efforts. Upon returning, I saw Park Hanbum being treated after being wound with bandages.

"I was attacked. Luckily it wasn't fatal."

He explained how a dark the size of a finger had lodged into his shoulder. It seemed he was attacked while passing a group of goblins.

Due to muscle damage, I took out a healing potion so that he could drink half and pour half onto his wounds.

"I'm sorry that you have to waste it on something like this."

"These are exactly the kinds of situations these potions are supposed to be use in. But how did the scouting go? I didn't see

anything useful in my area.”

“There was a bridge.”

“Is that true?”

“It was made out of wood, but it was definitely a bridge. I went closer to the bridge to check if the truck would be able to cross it, but that was when I got attacked by the goblins.”

“Goblins you say...I guess it's not impossible for them to have such a weapon but...”

Goblins were one of the most intelligent of the monster variety.

But they were weak. No matter how many goblins there were, it would not have been possible for them to create a bridge.

“There was also a sasquatch.”

“Sasquatch?”

They were a hairy humanoid monster. Usually about 2 meters tall, they were pretty stupid and slow so they weren't too hard to hunt.

“Yes, I think they probably used the sasquatch to help build the

bridge.”

“Were you able to check how many of them there were?”

“That’s....since I ran away as quickly as I could...I couldn’t really count them”

Park Hanbum shook his head. I guess it was too much to ask for him to do all that while he was trying to run for his life.

We waited a bit for him to get better before we started heading towards the bridge, goblins, and sasquatch.



# Chapter 83

---

“It’s close by.”

Screech.

At Park Hanbum’s words, Cho Youngoo brought the truck to a stop. Everyone geared up and carefully followed Park Hanbum to the bridge.

After walking about 1 kilometers, we saw a group of goblins sitting at the bottom of a hill.

Compared to anywhere else in the area, there were actually quite a lot of places to hide. There were lots of shrubs on this side but, once you cross the bridge, dense trees covered the land.

“I’ll go.”

“Will you be alright? What if you get hurt again?”

“Well I have this.”

Park Hanbum pointed to the mockingbird feather. This was an item that allowed the wearer to blend into their surroundings, so they are difficult to spot.

If he just moved carefully, he should be able to go unnoticed – at

least by the goblins.

Park Hanbum returned after about an hour.

“Near the shrubs, there are about 30 goblins and 12 sasquatches.”

That meant a total of 42 monsters.

Though there were a lot of monsters, at our current level, it was definitely doable. In fact, I think it would take at least a hundred or more level 1 and level 2 monsters to be able to take down our party.

“Should we go in?”

Park Hanbum asked. I nodded my head in response.

Now that we’ve fought in quite a number of battles together, everyone pretty much knew their general roles and positions.

Park Hanbum usually rode his bike to distract the monsters. And while the monsters chased after him in a group, it was Cho Youngoo and my job to get in front of the group and attack them from there. Usually, the element of surprise was enough for us to take on all the monsters ourselves. But if this doesn’t work, we usually slip behind the monsters and work as a group with everyone else to slay them together.

Then, at some point during battle, we usually release Kelby to

finish it up.

This would be how it played out again except for one small change due to the shrubs everywhere.

\*\*\*

Vroom!

Park Hanbum revved his motorcycle and drove noisily past the area where the monsters were hiding.

As soon as he drove by a dart, as long as the entire length of a hand, flew out of the shrubs.

The dart landed in the exact spot the bike had been in just a moment before.

Park Hanbum shot out an arrow. The way that he shot his arrow, halfway turned on his bike mid-riding, was very reminiscent of a mongolian warrior atop a horse.

Vroooooooooom!

After Park Hanbum drove away, the shrubs started to shake violently before several goblins jumped out from within.

We succeeded in luring them out. Not all. But no matter.

I took out a bottle of thinner from our backpack. I had packed about 10 bottles, so it shouldn't be a problem to light the shrubs on fire.

Shatter!

I lightly tossed the glass bottle about 20 meters into the bushes.

“Yeonkyoung!”

“Ok, partyhead!”

I didn't need to light it on fire myself. Yeonkyoung had the flame enchant, which she used on her arrow.

The arrow flew across the sky in a red flame and lodged in the shrubs.

Woosh!

In mere seconds, all shrubs in that general area caught on fire.

“EEEENG!”

“Kaaaa!”

About 20 goblins jumped out from the shrubs with a squeal. And the sasquatches joined in leaving their fiery hiding place.

We killed all of the monsters still in shock from the fire quite easily.

Kelby, as usual, ripped the remaining monsters to shreds with its powerful jaws. Manager Kim didn't even have time to cast his sleep spell.

The monsters had dropped 2 level 1 items and 10 ores. Park Hanbum walked back towards us with 2 more ores in tow.

Then we waited for the fire in the shrubs to completely die down.

After we confirmed one more time that all the monsters were dead, I carefully walked to where the bridge was.

“So it's made out of wood.”

The structure of the bridge was wide enough and looked sturdy enough for our truck to safely drive across it.

I was certain that amongst the monsters they'd had a skilled craftsmen.

But aside from its commendable structure, I was still unsure

whether or not wood would be capable of withstanding the weight of the truck.

“It’s not as if I could just lift it and carry it across.”

I wanted to try and test putting something else onto the bridge first, but there was nothing that would’ve weighed close to the 3 ton weight of the truck.

I kept looking around for a large boulder when I spied the trees on the other side of the bridge.

They all had large trunks and were fairly tall.

I thought that trees of that size should be considerably heavy.

I crossed the bridge to the other side and cut down a tree with my Smash Sword.

With a cutting sound, the 50 cm wide tree was too easily sliced right through.

Creaaaak.

As soon as I shoved the tree, a large woosh sound preceded the tree before it fell crashing to the ground. Since I could lift the entire thing to the bridge, I cut the tree into 5 pieces and placed them all onto the bridge.

Creak. Creak.

The bridge moved a bit and made some strange noises, but it didn't seem it was in danger of collapsing.

“Wow.”

“I know, how could something like a goblin build such a sturdy bridge as this...”

“I was talking about you, Sunbeh Oppa.”

“Me? Why?”

“Not only did you cut down such a humongous tree in one swing, but you carried it all the way to the bridge. No matter how you look at it, that's not something a normal person should be able to do.”

“I cut them into pieces so they weren't that heavy.”

“But they should still weigh about 500 kg each.”

“I could do that much easily...”

I didn't think it was difficult – at least for me. I threw the tree

pieces into the river from atop the bridge.

Plunk! Plunk!

After throwing all five into the river, we slowly started to drive over to the bridge. With an anxious face, Cho Youngoo carefully drove onto the wooden goblin bridge.

Squeeak.

A sound like a rusty hinge makes reverberated in my ears as the bridge shuddered.

But the wood is naturally a resilient material. We were safe. At least we were as long as we didn't hear the bottom of the bridge actually breaking.

It might have broken more easily were it older, but the bridge still looked relatively new.

Vroom.

Squeaak. Squeak.

And so the truck finally made it over the bridge. Every single party member let out a sigh of relief almost as soon as we made it across.



“Ha. I thought I’d pass out from holding my breath so long.”

Cho Youngoo shook his head and got out of the truck. He looked back at the bridge in wonder.

“But do you think it’ll still stay up by the time we come back?”

“It looks sturdy enough to be just fine even for a few months at least.”

We didn’t even need that much time. We should be able to load up on plenty of dropped items in a month.

I turned to look back in the direction of the marshes. We were now in the forested area.

The only thing connecting the two lands was the one wooden bridge. And if the bridge breaks, we would have no means of getting back.

Of course, worst case scenario, we could take the long way and walk until the river ended. But that was a hassle.

I walked back to the bridge to inspect it more carefully.

Seeing that there were areas that were considerably weakened by the truck riding across, I considered doing a bit of reinforcement work.

While I continued to inspect it in this way, a strange thought began to creep into my thoughts.

Would a goblin really be able to build such a sophisticated bridge as this?

I mean, they are clever – I'll admit that much. They could do as much as create their own simple crossbow type of weapon to fire darts and other projectiles.

And there were some even more high level goblins who could create something even more complicated.

I've even heard stories that Level 10 Goblins could create items even beyond human comprehension.

If I considered this, it wasn't too strange to think they might have created the bridge.

But the problem was, all the goblins we had hunted were level 1s.

If you were to compare the intelligence of a level 1 goblin to human standards, they were the equivalent of a 10 year old.

Would those monsters really have been able to use a sasquatch to create this kind of bridge?

I found it more and more difficult to believe as I kept thinking about it.

And then I became pretty sure that the goblins just happened to be near the bridge. The bridge itself was probably manmade.

If this was true, who was it that made this bridge?

# Chapter 84

---

I slowly moved my body to follow Kelby.

After walking for a few hundred meters in this manner, I heard some voices up ahead.

Three people in all. There were two men resting under a tree while one person was stationed higher up the tree – probably acting as a sentry.

All three of them were equipped with a bow and arrow on their backs. They looked to be level 3 weapons – nothing amazing, but enough to be a sufficient threat.

I hid amongst the trees so that I could freely steal snippets of conversation.

I couldn't understand a word of it.

I couldn't tell when I was farther away, but I knew now. Though I couldn't understand what they were saying, there were familiar tones mixed in here and there.

They were Chinese.

This meant they went all the way around the entire West Sea and ended up here in the forested area deep in the south.

Hm. It seems things just got complicated.

We purposely avoided going North to avoid unnecessary complications, only to end up facing a bigger one. Their being here meant that they meant to take control of the new land...all of it.

This was worlds away from the general understanding that the new land would be split 'equally' between Korea and China – as equally as possible anyway.

This land was the farthest point from China. If Chinese hunters took control of the land here, that meant Korean hunters would be facing enemies from both sides. We would be surrounded. And there was a good chance that the new land could fall entirely into the hands of China. Shit. I had thought the problem with China was an issue completely unrelated to me. What am I supposed to do?

I could rush out right now and overpower those guys. As I was now, it wouldn't be hard to go up against 3 hunters even if they were all level 3.

But then again, why is it my job to intervene?

Isn't this for someone higher up...?

Someone like Lee Wheeseung, for example. Yeah. It's definitely not a place for a hunter of less than 1 years' experience to try and

interfere.

I picked up Kelby.

First things first – I needed to get back to my team without revealing myself.

If I needed to get rid of them, I could always do it later.

Vroom-

Right when I was getting ready to leave, I heard an approaching vehicle. It was not the sound of the truck we rode in. It sounded lighter. It sounded more like a van.

Who....?

I ducked down and looked at their expressions.

As soon as the one sitting high up in the tree started waving around his arms and yelling at the guys on the ground, both men picked their weapons up off the ground and got up.

After a brief moment, a van came into view. It kicked up clouds of dust as it came to a stop and the driver got out. He was probably in his mid forties. Had on level 4 gear.

I used my manual to check him out and he even had a level 4 skill: Lion Strength.

This skill increases reflexes and strength by 100%. Additionally, after raising proficiency up until a certain point, the skill allows an extra option: 'roar'. Roar allows the user to yell out – causing the opponent to freeze for a full second.

This option could be used immediately at any time. And one second in battle was invaluable.

Anyway, I had to leave. If that van goes back on the move, it could end up bumping into our truck. I needed to contact them before that happens to alert them to hide the truck.

I took out my phone and created a Team Delta chatroom.

-[Me: Discovered Chinese hunters. Expecting one van to head towards you. Please go into hiding and stand by.]

-[Sooah: China? Why are they here?]

-[Me: How am I supposed to know? Whether we let the government know or not, it's best to distance ourselves from the situation for now.]

If they were a raid team like the Ezekiel, we could always fight them head on. But if they were a hunter team for their country, we couldn't do whatever we wanted. We had to proceed with caution.

-[Han Joonseok: Where did the van come from? We didn't see any vehicles drive past us.]

-[Me: I think they crossed over the same bridge we crossed over. They might be the ones to have built the bridge in the first place.]

-[Han Joonseok: Does that means they were roaming the Southern Marshes?]

-[Me: I think their goal is reconnaissance. I don't know how many of them are occupying the forest, but I don't think they have so many men that they can spare them to roam the marshes. It's not as if China has a lot of hunters to spare.]

-[Han Joonseok: So they're really trying to take over the new land and keep it for themselves.]

-[Me: Those were my thoughts exactly.]

-[Manager Kim: Are those Chinese hunters strong?]

-[Me: About level 4?]

-[Manager Kim: If they're that strong...I doubt they're just here to scout.]

Manager Kim's words hit me as if someone struck me on the head



with a hammer.

Why didn't I think of that?

The one who seemed like the leader of the group was a level 4 hunter. There was no way someone that strong was just roaming around in the south for recon.

What if it wasn't just Ezekiel? Couldn't it be that the Chinese were also responsible for the hunter deaths?

The news reported that over 1,000 hunters were missing. Of course they couldn't have taken all of those hunters, but I would bet money they were responsible for a good amount of missing men.

There was one way to confirm my hunch. I needed to get into that van.

The Chinese hunters' voices got louder. The one who got out of the van was yelling out while pointing at his leg.

The hunters on stand by were getting louder by the minute too.

I couldn't understand a word as usual, but I could pretty much understand the situation.

It felt like he was yelling at them about dealing with the invaders

– us.

How stupid am I?

Whatever they were saying, they were all our enemies.

If I left them alive, they could sneak up on us later and be the death of us.

-[Me: I'm changing our plan. We will be attacking the van. Leave the truck on stand by. Everyone spread out and be prepared to attack.]

-[Sooah: How about you, Sunbeh Oppa?]

-[Me: I'll get rid of the sentries here first. I'll hurry it up and get to you guys as soon as I can.]

# Chapter 85

---

The fastest speed that a van would be able to travel on a road that hasn't been properly paved was probably about 40 km/hr.

Since I could run faster than that, I figured I would have plenty of time to catch up to the van after taking care of the three hunters first.

Vroom-

Soon, the van revved back to life and started on its way. The scouts took out their walkie talkies and seemed to be reporting back to someone.

Whatever. They already knew we were here. It was now their aim to find us before we could reveal their whereabouts to the rest of the Korean hunters.

But before they could do that, we would be taking care of them first.

“Kelby, sneak up behind them and wait. Once you see me attacking from here, you attack them from behind.”

Kelby quietly disappeared into the forest. No matter how skilled of a hunter they were, there was no way they would be able to hear the stealthy prowling of an animal in hunt.

I continued to move as quietly as I could as well.

Three enemies. They were all long distance fighters.

They did have swords on their hips, but there was nothing I didn't know about their equipment or skills.

All three of them were lacking in physical abilities. I only needed to close the distance between us and it would be game over for them.

I hurriedly moved from tree to tree so that I can begin the fight as close to them as possible. It wasn't until I was just 10 meters away from them until they finally realized I was there.

This was because my boost in all my physical abilities allowed me greater control of my body.

If I felt like it, I could probably continue this way until I was right behind them.

But there was no reason to do that. At even 10 meters, I should be able to take care of them in less than a few seconds.

I took a big breath.

Crack!

A twig under my foot made a sound as it broke in half. As soon as they looked my way, I unsheathed my sword and plowed in.

“X\*&??”

“?!KD#!”

“What are you saying!”

Two of them began to raise up their bows in a panic. Seeing that they were trying to use those things when an enemy was right in front of them, they must have had zero confidence in their swordsmanship.

I cut one hunter's bows in half and kicked him back. Hard. Just then, an arrow flew at me from the third guy.

I simply raised my arm to block it before plunging my blade right into his gut.

Woosh!

Another arrow flew right over my head. I made a quick sidestep just as two arrows struck the ground I had been standing on a moment before. He was fast. But that was all.

Chomp!

“Ahhhhh!”

Kelby, who had climbed up the tree at some point, chewed out the throat of the last hunter. It had taken us a mere 10 seconds to cut down three hunters. Thanks to the element of surprise and their weakness in close combat, we were able to finish things off very easily.

I dragged all three bodies deeper in the forest and quickly hid them before putting Kelby into my manual. I would have plenty of time to catch up to that van.

-[Sooah: Raid.]

Sooah posted a message in the chatroom. The van shouldn't have reached them yet. It seems they were fighting against some other enemy.

I ran even faster. Once I ran past the van, I could hear a ruckus of yelling behind me.

But they weren't important right now.

Slam!

Upon arriving, I saw a battle scene of my party fighting against another with the truck in between them. Luckily, none of my team seemed to have gotten hurt.

I immediately brought Kelby out from storage after assessing the situation and threw him at the enemy group. As he flew in the air, he grew into a massive size.

The dog that had been the size of my hand just a moment before was now the size of a grown tiger.

Unsurprisingly, Kelby drew the gaze of everyone there with his little trick.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Arrows began to rain down on the large pup.

And his deep wrinkles began to form along his snout as he bared his teeth. He didn't like that.

“Snarrrl. GRRROWL!”

“Ahhh?”

“#\*DU@!”

The battlefield was a mess. I began to look around.

The enemy was clumped into a group on the opposite side of the

truck. There were about 20 of them that looked to be long range hunters and about 10 hunters who looked to be close combat hunters.

My team was definitely at a disadvantage when it came to sheer numbers, but Cho Youngoo was successfully marking all the close combat hunters so that Jong Sawon could freely move around to take them down.

On top of that, there were spiderwebs strategically placed here and there to further act as a barricade and restrict the opponents' movements. The many trees of the forest, surprisingly, came be very useful.

Nearby, I spied a huge ball of cobwebs rolling around. I turned to look at Sooah.

“Manager Kim is safe.”

“I’m sure he’ll have something to say later on. What’s the situation?”

“We took care of 2 enemies. It seems like they’re dragging the time....waiting for something.”

“They might be waiting for the van that’s on its way here. Let’s finish this before their backup arrives.”

Kelby was already running wild and attacking the enemy. Seeing



the animal pounce on them without any regard for its own life caused the hunters to run in a panic.

It seemed they were most panic-stricken at the thought of having to kill a seemingly high level monster on top of fighting us.

Ultimately, it was Kelby's outstanding work and rounding up all crazed and frightened hunters that allowed us to take them all down easily.

No matter how thick his hide was, it still didn't change the fact that he now had several swords lodged all over his body and about 10 arrows sticking out as well. He was done.

It felt to me that his defense was underwhelming when compared to his amazing offensive power.

Even still, he did his job.

At the end of his strength, Kelby disappeared – almost as if he had evaporated.

Watching this happen, Yeongyoung carefully asked.

“He didn't die...right?”

“We should be able to call him out again after about a day.”

“That’s a relief.”

Hand on her chest, she let out a big sigh.

It seemed she had been frightened at the prospect of losing Kelby.

I don’t know why but this made me want to poke a little fun.

“But there is one problem.”

“What, what kind of problem?”

I could see the blood drain from her face.

Unlike Sooah, seeing a real reaction, made this all the more fun.

“It’s a big problem actually.”

“What in the world is it?”

“The effects of the items he act disappear.”

“....what?”

“It’s such a waste. All those expensive items.”

“Ah. Yes, it is. A waste.”

Yeonkyoung nodded her head seriously.

Hm...I really think I don't have a knack for making jokes. I said that to make her laugh...but she took it seriously.

Vroom!

Just then, I heard the rev of the van approaching in the distance.

# Chapter 86

---

It was the van from before. To think it was only just arriving. It seemed late.

I guess driving on the dirt road was even harder than I thought it would be.

“It doesn’t look like they’re going to slow down any time soon.”

Sooah said in surprise.

No matter how fast a hunter’s reflexes were, it wasn’t impossible to hit and kill them by running them over with a car or van.

They probably saw that we had quite a few people on our side and decided to reduce our numbers by running some of us over.

“It’s dangerous!”

“Party head, hurry and get out of the...”

“It’s alright.”

I lightly shook my head before bringing out the Toyul Hammer from my manual.

“Sunbeh Oppa! What in the world are you...?!”

The van continued to rush at me full speed. I could hear a violent rattling noise leaking through the suspension.

Slam!

A ray of lightning fell straight down from the sky with a roar.

Crackle! Crack!

The vehicle, ripped apart into a wreckage of parts were scattered everywhere.

The burning debris was still smoking from the fire lit by the diesel, and all 6 hunters who had been riding in the van were now in such a condition that they were unbearable to look at.

I, on the other hand, apart from some minor scratches made by the flying debris was almost entirely unharmed.

“What, what the hell were you thinking?”

Sooah said with a stutter. She looked as if she were on the verge of tears. Was she that worried?

“If it’s a level 5 Toyul Hammer, there’s no way I wouldn’t have

been able to handle something so benign as a van. The hunters who decided to come at me full throttle in the van were the idiots.”

“But what if something went wrong?!”

“Well...I guess there was a light chance something could have gone wrong. Like if I didn’t strike at the right timing...or if the impact of my strike was off...I might have gotten hit and died...”

“And you still did something stupid like that?”

“But it’s fine as long as it’s just that one time right?”

Because I had the Immortality Skill in my possession. If something happened where I were to incur enough damage to warrant “death”, my skill would kick it and bring me back to full health.

Like, for example, getting hit by a car.

It was dangerous, true, but I was able to kill 6 hunters in just one blow.

And this was a group of hunters that had a level 4 hunter among them too. Though I didn’t check all of their stats one by one, I knew that that group of 6 was far stronger than the group of 30 hunters we faced just a moment ago.

How did I know this? Because if they weren't strong, they wouldn't have gone off on their own to search the Southern Marshes.

“It's not fine.”

Squeeze.

Her hand, which had been grasping mine, squeezed hard.

She looked as if a tear would spill out right that instant.

Did she not understand what I just told her?

“What I'm saying is, I wouldn't have died...”

“There, there's an item here!”

Park Hanbum, who had been inspecting the wreckage let out a yell. The bulk of the items were found inside a broken wooden box that had been in the van. There were probably close to 20 items that spilled out of the broken vehicle in addition to those found in the box.

We first picked up all the equipment. The equipment we picked up in this manner in addition to those that were used by our enemies was tallied at a total of 35.

We assumed they were all initially from the wooden box.

Just from looking at the type of items, it was hard to tell whether they were obtained by killing other hunters or by killing monsters.

And we couldn't find out for sure by any other means because the ones who knew were now all dead. But quite a number of equipment had been stained by the black blood of men.

If they were obtained by fighting monsters, there was no way the items would have come discolored with blood in this way.

“It seems they had been hunting and killing hunters who seemed relatively weak. From the number of equipment, they killed a smaller amount of hunters than expected, but this is a problem we cannot overlook.”

If the number of equipment was 35, then we could safely say they probably killed between 10 to 20 hunters.

“But there could also be more of these guys...”

Han Joonseok spoke up.

“I don't think that they would be so bold as to send several teams. If they were, it would have been hard for us to see any monsters near the bridge.”



“Ah, you’re right. I didn’t think of that.”

“Well, I think the important thing right now is to make all of this known to the others. Luckily I have a contact within the police force so....”

“Do you mean that lady officer from before?”

Sooah sniffed. As soon as I nodded my head, her expression turned to stone.

“Stop thinking stupid and unnecessary thoughts. It’s not like that.”

“Ah...then why do you feel the need to explain yourself?”

“In case you get it in your head to do something stupid.”

“Me? What would I do?”

Sooah stared at me with a big smiling face. It seemed I got her to calm down.

“Anyway, let’s start moving. It’s a shame that we came all the way across the bridge only to turn back but...”

“Right. Since we can’t confirm the scale of infiltration by the

Chinese in this area, it's best to err on the side of caution."

Han Joonseok finished as he nodded his head. No one disagreed. Cho Youngoo didn't have an opinion on the matter while Jong Sawon rarely, if ever, spoke his piece. Since Park Hanbum was still new to the group, he mostly kept his opinions to himself. Sooah pretty much always followed whatever decision I made and Yeonkyoung was busy spacing out.

Meanwhile our Manager Kim....wait.

"Manager Kim?"

I turned around to look at the huge bundle behind me. The bundle of cobweb began to squirm.

After Manager Kim kicked up a big old fuss once released, I put all the equipment into my manual before we headed out.

If we stuck around any longer, we could end up unnecessarily bumping into more enemies.

Though Cho Youngoo drove with an anxious face the whole time we crossed back over the wooden bridge, we were able to get over it without any problems once again.

In the truck, I took out my phone and made a call.

[This is Lieutenant Sohn Aram.]

“Hi, it’s Jeon Sangmin.”

[Oh, and why are you calling out of the blue?]

“There is something important I felt you should know.”

I briefly recapped what had happened earlier.

How the Chinese hunters had occupied the forested area and how they had probably attacked and killed the missing Korean hunters in the new land.

[How sure are you?]

“Very sure. We even fought against them firsthand. They were all Chinese.”

[And proof?]

“If you need proof...”

[Something that could identify them. It could even be a dead body.]

“That’s...not possible.”

Bringing over a dead body was impossible. Since they had all evaporated already.

# Chapter 87

---

Additionally, they had used a generic vehicle was was commonly used in our country. They most likely planned it that way to keep from being caught.

-[Then I'm at a loss. Even if you had proof, I don't have the type of authority to mobilize the police force to pursue such a lead.]

Though she was a Lieutenant and an elite in the police force, she still had her limits.

Lacking experience as a mid twenties female officer, you could say that she only had the bare minimum in power that her status afforded her.

But I also hoped this highly unusual situation would warrant use of power that would normally be out of reach.

“Then are you saying you just want to wait and see what happens before making a move?”

[Well, I'll take it up to my superiors. But I can't say what they will decide to do. For that reason, it is better if we had proof.]

“Proof you say...”

[Proof that will force my superiors to make a move. Isn't it for

this very reason that we sent out hunters to the new land in the first place? To secure claim on the land?]

“That’s a nice way of saying we were looking for reasons to kill the Chinese hunters so that we can keep the new land to ourselves.”

[That isn’t what I was saying but if it comes to that then...]

She gave a small shrug. Hunters are expendable. It’s not as if they were any special. If you just had the money, being a Hunter was possible for anybody. It didn’t matter much if several hundred hunters died or not.

As soon as I hung up, Sooah spoke.

“What happened?”

“I don’t think the police will do anything without solid proof.”

“Then does that mean we have to turn back?”

Manager Kim scrunched up his face in annoyance.

“No. We don’t know how many enemies are posted there. Going in blind is suicide. We were lucky once before. Let’s not press our luck again.”

They were most likely hunters picked out by the Chinese government. It would be great if there were only low level hunters, but if they had even one or two level 5 hunters mixed in somewhere...it would be tough.

That didn't mean we were going to give in and back down. If we just let them be, the Chinese would end up monopolizing all of the monsters and items in the forest.

Just that would be a huge loss, but the real problem was what would come after that.

After hunting all the monsters in that land, the hunters would only grow stronger. And after they leveled up and wiped out the monsters in the forest? They would probably decide to move north.

“Should I post something on the hunter market board?”

Sooah asked.

“Hm?”

“If we posted something onto the information bulletin, wouldn't it do something? I'm sure no one would ignore it.”

“Hm...that's not a bad idea.”

“Yay! I got a compliment!”

We decided to do just as she said and post up a note on the board.

As soon as we posted it up, comments began to flood in.

-There are Chinese hunters in the forested area? Is that true?

-Is China crazy? Going there means they really want to fight it out with us isn't it? Are they stupid shit? Weren't we going to split the land and keep the peace?

-Seeing the username of the person who posted this...it looks like they're a new hunter....? How can we trust them?

-I searched the username and saw that they made a few posts about recruiting some party members. And it looks like they haven't even been a hunter for that long. Yeah right I'll trust them.

-Wait, I feel like I've heard that name before.

-Isn't Jeon Sangmin part of Team Delta? You know. The one that came out in that crazy fighting video...

-What video?



-You know. The hunter who beat the shit out of Ezekiel. Remember? That's how everyone was able to break through the barricade and get into the South Marshlands.

-That's him? Well shit, then I don't think they're lying.

-So does that mean the Chinese are really in the forested area...? Isn't that kind of scary?

-Aren't there more people who went down there? Anybody?

-Now that I think about it, there's no information on any hunters talking about the forested area.

-You're right. Even if it's super far, there's no way no one attempting hunting all the way out there.

-Surely, they didn't all end up getting killed by the Chinese hunters there.

-Sounds like a modern day scary story....the possibility of it being true is giving me chills.

Hm. It seems that having sort of a famous name comes in handy in times like this.

"I think that this should be enough to cause an issue."

Sooah said. The bulletin boards at the hunter market are used the most by all of the hunter community.

If things became an issue there, something would happen.

-Let's post it on the best/popular posts. Everyone upvote it. Shouldn't alot of people know something like this?

-Yeah. We need to confirm if it's real or fake anyway. Let's post it.

-If it goes up on the best/popular posts list, I'm sure someone will decide to go fact check.

Out of all the millions of posts in the community, the posts that are upvoted as a best/popular post become even more viewed.

If it really becomes upvoted as a best/popular post, our mission is complete.

Even if I didn't do anything, there were plenty of curious hunters out there searching for the truth. If the police didn't want to move, there should be other people determined enough to do something about it. And they would probably be able to get the proof that we couldn't get.

"I kind of feel bad about shifting the responsibility of getting such an important thing like this to someone else."

Cho Youngoo whispered.

“But it’s not as if we could go in and do everything ourselves – especially when we don’t know what kind of force we’re dealing with. It might seem a bit underhanded, but my priority is keeping my party members safe.”

“Cheers to that.”

Manager Kim said as he nodded his head up and down. That made me a bit curious. Curious as to why a man who was so set on safety was still in our party. He should have earned enough money by now where he wouldn’t have to be a hunter anymore....

“Manager Kim, how long do you intend on staying a hunter?”

“Why do you ask? Do you want to fire me too? I’ve been working hard on my own time to be a better hunter you know?”

I might have hit a nerve because he yelled out pompously as his face turned a bright red.

“No, that’s not why I asked. I just thought you didn’t even like being a hunter. And you must have earned quite a bit. I was just wondering why you were still with us.”

“If I just follow you, money keeps on flowing in. You think I’m

crazy to leave such a goldmine of an opportunity? I guess you still don't know your worth huh?"

"My worth?"

# Chapter 88

---

“Yes. Your worth. Should I say that you are something like a walking golden goose? You know? The ones in the stories where you can rip open the stomach of a goose and you get a bunch of gold out of it. Ah. I don’t know. I’m not saying we’re going to cut you open or anything. I mean. Uhh what I mean is...”

“Your explanation is a bit off but I get the gist of it.”

He was probably trying to say a golden goose that lays golden eggs but ended up vomiting some nonsense instead in his excitement.

“Now what do we do? Should we hunt somewhere nearby or something?”

Cho Youngoo yelled out while holding onto the steering wheel.

“No, let’s go back to the West Sea City.”

“What? You mean to turn back even though we haven’t been out more than a day?”

“My storage is full right now.”

“Ah...”

The issue at hand was critical. The Chinese hunters had infiltrated the large forested areas while it would still take some time for the police force to take action.

We had resorted to posting something on the hunter market bulletin but until someone can find some real proof to substantiate our claim, we couldn't be sure that anything will come of it.

But aside from all that, we had still come up with a great many items from just one simple battle.

My item storage was completely full. My manual allowed me to store 100 different types of items.

This meant that if they were the same item, I could store an infinite amount of them.

My manual, not including my equipment, currently had 120 items stored in it.

This included the 35 equipment from the enemy van, 7 items that were dropped from the dead bodies of the Chinese hunters, and the equipment they had on them – totaling 78 items.

I couldn't even calculate how much all of this would amount to. I never would have imagined we would have come upon so many items in such a short amount of time.

“How many do we have in all?”

“120.”

“Wow....then how much is all of it going to be....?”

Sooah said with a bit of drool spilling out the side of her open mouth.

On top of the sheer volume of items we now had to see, the price of each item far exceeded what we had before too. The reason was because compared to the items dropped by monsters, the level of items the hunters had carried were higher.

There were over 10 items that were level 3s and we even had 3 level 4 items.

I tried to calculate the numbers in my head for a minute before it got to crazy and I gave up. At the very minimum we should take away 20,000,000.

And this would be earnings for a day's hunt...er....battle...

I still couldn't believe it.

“With this, I think it's now time for us to register as a regular team. We'll come across the issue of paying taxes too now so...”

Han Joonseok said as he looked at me.

Hunters have to pay taxes too. If you hunt as a solo hunter as we have been doing, technically by legal standards, since we are considered a private company, we pay a lot in taxes.

For this reason, if a hunter moves up and starts generating considerable revenue, it makes sense to apply as a regular raid team – if only for the tax breaks.

We would become an official raid team.

Hunters toss the word “pro” around for these types of teams.

“Wow. To think we’re already pros. Insane.”

“Don’t let it get to your head. Even if we apply to be a regular raid team, there’s still only 8 of us.”

“But it’s still sufficient. Who knows? Maybe we’ll even be big enough to catch up to even Ezekiel soon.”

“They have at least 300 people in their team. And it’s not as if we earned all this through any real hunting.”

“That is true.”

“But I have a feeling that these recent events will be a stepping stone to something big. I don’t know how you guys will take this,



but I feel like hunting Chinese hunters will end up being much more lucrative than hunting monsters.”

The item drop probability in the new land is slightly higher than in the dungeons.

But the haul from hunting the enemy hunters who crossed into territory that should have been ours...was 100% as long as you didn't die.

I mean, the ones who had invaded the land furthest from their own land was them and the ones who had attacked first was them as well.

If anyone were to fight them anyway, why shouldn't it be us?

But the risk factor was still too high. There was too much of the unknown. Until we find out some more information about the enemy, there was no reason to put ourselves into unnecessary danger.

\*\*\*

After travelling all night, we finally reached the West Sea City at dawn.

While we were still in the vehicle, I decided on what I should do with all the items.

Including the Level 4 items, I decided it would be best to sell them all and pay out as contribution distributions.

This was because there were just too many items to properly be able to split them up fairly.

The only items I decided to keep were the items that dropped from the dead hunters.

Why? Because they were items that would not be recognized at the market and I had a feeling that they would be useful.

The new items were as follows:

- Escape 5 sheets

- Light Healing Potion 5 bottles

- Ventilation Potion 1 bottle

The Escape Scrolls and Light Healing Potions came as one set. Including what we already had we now had a total of 27 Escape scrolls, 13 light healing potions, and 2 Ventilation Potions.

Since the Escape scrolls weren't something we had any immediate need for, we just kept accumulating them.

The following were the equipment items:

- Antique explorer's hat (1): Increases item drop probability by 10%
- Red speed enhancing shoes (2): Increases speed by 2x for 5 minutes. After use, decreases speed by double for 10 minutes.
- Miner's mittens (1): Increases ore drop probability by 30%
- Blunt sword (0): A sword. Has the ability to upgrade.

The thing that stood out most to me was that an upgrade was possible.

Just like the manual, I was able to upgrade the sword by investing some ores.

Checking how many ores were needed to perform an upgrade, it didn't seem to be too many compared to how much I needed to upgrade my manual.

Since we had 20 ore drops recently, I just invested them all into upgrading that sword. I had also earned 7,000 in rewards points on our last "hunt" as well.

"Manager Kim can wear the Antique Explorer Hat. I think it'll

suit you.”

“Hm. I don’t really care for the design too much.”

At Sooah’s comment, Manager Kim lightly put on the hat.

The hat in question was a fedora.

“Wow. You look like the spitting image of Indiana Jones!”

“Hmm...I guess I am a bit dashing aren’t I.”

Manager Kim said as he began chuckling with a deeper than usual pitch. It seemed he still didn’t realize we were trying to pawn the hat off to him since it was something that was too difficult to wear while fighting or hunting.

“I think you should also wear the Miner’s mitten as well.”

I said.

This type of glove was used to protect miners’ hands from working all day with a pickaxe.

Its design made it chiefly to protect than to allow the wearers flexibility. This meant fighting with such a glove on was almost impossible.

“I already wear a glove. Are you asking me to wear another one?”

He raised his hand. He was wearing the Selfish Hunter's Glove which increased item drop probability by 10%.

“Can't you just wear this glove on top of the one you're wearing now? Or we can just have Sooah wear the Selfish Hunter's Glove instead.”

“No, I'll wear them both. I can just put them on when we're fighting, right?”

“Yep.”

This was true. Since the only job he had during a fight was to raise his canes once at the beginning.

After that, his role was to hide somewhere and wait for the fight to be over so there was no need for him to need his hands during battle.

It was best for him to gather a number of different items that increased our buffs or helped the team in this way where our drop probabilities increase.

It seemed Manager Kim at least sensed a bit that he needed to help the team in this way to keep up with everyone else increasing

their levels.

# Chapter 89

---

“And I will be keeping the blunt sword.”

I thought that someone might say something against it but no one said a peep.

It was the first level 0 weapon we’ve come across and it had the potential for growth as all level 0 items seemed to have. It didn’t seem at all special right now but I’m sure it could become something great later on with the right coaxing.

And I made the final executive decision to give the red speed-enhancing shoes to Jong Sawon. Since his fighting style required speed, I thought it was a perfect match.

\*\*\*

“You came again?”

The market employee said with apparent surprise etched on his face. It was the very same employee that we had poured out all of our items in front of just two days earlier. There was no way he would have forgotten about us.

“This and that happened and here we are.”

“So what brings you here today...?”

“We are here to sell some more items.”

“Oh...so you didn't like the items you had purchased last time it seems? Certainly the Toyul Hammer is not for the faint of heart.”

I could see a faint smirk dancing at the edges of the employee's mouth. His eyes were mocking me as if to ask why I would buy something I didn't know anything about like an amateur.

Am I being paranoid? No. It was written all over that man's face.

“No, that's not it. We have some new items to sell.”

“I'm sorry? Didn't you sell me everything you had just two days ago?”

“That is true but...”

“Certainly you didn't come back to sell the same amount as before in such a short time?”

“Of course not.”

“Of course. There's just no way. Then let us go inside...”

After following the employee inside, we continued on into the



small room to do the exchange.

“Can you show me the items?”

I lightly laughed before flicking my hand in the air. All of the items in my storage started spilling out at once.

Boom! Clank! Slam! Clank clank clank.

The employee who had been waiting patiently without any anticipation started to lose all the color in his face second after second.

10, 20, 30, when the items showed no sign of stopping, he opened his mouth and spoke with a pained expression to ask.

“Just, just how many on earth did you bring?”

“A little over 100.”

There should have been 113 items left over but I used some of the items in combination with the blisolnites and ansilites on hand to fuse them.

The number of items decreased a bit, but our overall profit should have increased.

“....sweet baby Jesus.”

Even as he whispered his words of surprise, the items continued spilling out of the air.

It took a bit for him to calculate everything.

But the total profit for us came out to 31,100,000.

I got dizzy for a moment. I kept looking and doing double takes but the numbers he had written out for me remained the same.

“...You are probably the only person who has earned this much money from our store.”

“Is that so? I would have expected pro teams to earn quite a bit of money too?”

“Well pro teams are directly connected to the head office. They even have a separate team dedicated to tending to them.”

“Oh...that’s the first I hear of that.”

When we had hunted in the dungeons, there was no reason for us to go out to the hunter market and sell our items. This was because we usually just turned them over to the dungeon operators and they paid us out right then and there.

But this was a special circumstance – with the advent of the new land. Also because of the threat of the Chinese hunters crossing the halfway line of the new land, there was no way pro hunters would travel to and fro from their station just to sell their items. For that reason, it seems they were assigned a separate team to pick up and drop off their items to the market for them.

It seems that the five pro teams I had mentioned earlier earned enough items for the hunter market to go out of their way in such a manner. I wouldn't be surprised if the largest team, Team Galaxy, earned several 100 millions at a time.

Thinking of the higher drop rates and easier hunting on the new land, I wouldn't be surprised if they make even more than that.

The employee asked.

“In any case, do you not have any ores? I'm sure you aren't throwing them all away.”

“Ah, another member of the team is taking care of that. I don't sell them myself.”

Ores, which are usually sold to the dungeon operators, are also being sold to the hunter market stores in the new land. The law usually mandates that ores are only sold to the government, but the new land created this need to sell to the markets.

Curious, I asked.

“Is there any way for us to procure or buy ores here?”

“Hm, I’m not sure. We do purchase ores at our store but everything we purchase is managed by the police. We do not have the authority to sell ores in our possession. But where do you want to use them, if I may ask? I don’t think I’ve ever heard that anybody could use it in any way in its natural form.”

“No, I was just wondering. You could say it’s a bit of a hobby of mine...you know...making this and that out of things.”

Making the ores usable in any way required a dissolving and leaching process with strong acids – something that required a factory to do.

My excuse sounded lame even to my own ears. Good job Sangmin. Good job.

\*\*\*

I gave each team member 3 million dollars and kept 10 million to myself.

Now that we had earned a crapload of money, until we received any new piece of information regarding the forest, we were going to take a well deserved break.

Manager Kim, Park Hanbum, and Bae Yeonkyoung returned home. I gave everyone 3 days off.

Since we all agreed that we would all meet up immediately if I contacted them before the three days were up, there was no issue with giving them that time off.

Ever since the monster wave and the new land, new roads had been paved everywhere.

Unless you were somewhere extremely far or remote, getting to the new city was usually only a few hours' drive away.

Han Joonseok, Jong Sawon, and Cho Youngoo headed to the shopping center in the West Sea Ccity.

Since all three of them had an interest in cars, it seemed they bonded in that way.

I could see that. Jong Sawon was a bike fanatic – seeing as how he went so far as to always wear a full face bike helmet everywhere.

I found out that he had only sold his bike so that he could purchase his equipment. I guessed that he was probably keen on buying another bike with his new earnings.

That was not a bad idea. If we were to go back into the forest, I'm sure there would be parts our truck would not be able to pass through. Then a bike would come in handy indeed.

The truck was big enough to hold a few bikes so space wasn't an issue either.

In the case space did become an issue, we could just go and buy another truck.

I mean. We did earn a lot of money this time around.

If it were like old times, I wouldn't have even thought of spending money in this way.

Left to myself at the hostel, I took out the blunt sword and held it out.

This was the new level 0 weapon I had come upon.

Just as its name implied, it was extremely...how do you say it...ordinary.

In fact, since the blade was almost as thick as a finger, it was closer to an iron rod than a sword.

If you were to try and fight a monster with this thing, instead of slicing it or stabbing it...you would probably need to kill it by hitting it to death.

But I'm sure it would change in some way after an upgrade so I

wasn't quick to judge.

The level 0 items I came across before this were two skillbooks: effort and friendship. And both of them came with amazing... almost cheatlike features.

I sat on the sofa and turned on the tv when Sooah spoke up.

“Are you trying to upgrade it? But we don't even have any ores left.”

The first upgrade required 50 ores. Compared to what the manual needed, it was definitely on the cheaper side.

I had invested 726 ores so far into my manual for its next upgrade. I took 50 from that and invested it towards the sword.

-You have fulfilled the upgrade requirements for the blunt sword. Would you like to proceed?

# Chapter 90

---

A green message popped up on my glasses lens.

“Proceed.”

As soon as I spoke the command, the sword I had placed on the table began to vibrate.

Woong~

The low frequency sound kept ringing out.

The sword defied all law of physics and began to float in mid air.

“Oh, insane.”

Sooah said as she watched the sword. She looked like she was on the verge of clapping.

I just stood by and watched the sword carefully. I noticed ever slight changes happening before my eyes. In some parts it almost looked like fine powder moving around, and then it would look like small bits of light moving around. Strange.

-Upgrade completion: 81%.



It was all happening fairly quickly. Not even 1 minute had passed since the process began and it was almost already 80% complete. And then the upgrade was done.

It didn't really look any different. It was still as blunt as it had been before the upgrade.

If I had to point something out, I'd have to say it was the red gem that was now on the hilt of the sword.

-Upgrade complete. The 'Blunt Sword' has been upgraded to the "Blunt Dancing Sword".

A green message appeared again above my glasses.

Blunt Dancing Sword (o): Stands by in the vicinity of the user to attack and defend against attacks from surrounding enemies. Depending on the setting, a variety of different attack methods may be used.

The name is too long. I'll call it the Dancing Sword from now on instead.

"It doesn't look like it changed at all really..."

Sooah said as she inspected the sword.

"Hold it up for a minute."

“Is it ok for me to hold it first?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Then I’ll....ahhh?”

Swish!

As soon as she tried to pick up the sword, the Dancing Sword wooshed and dodged her hand on its own.

Surprised by the sword that was floating in midair, she tried to grab hold of it once more but the sword evaded her again.

“This damn sword...”

Clearly annoyed now, Sooah bolted up from her seat to chase after the animated weapon. The sword was able to take basic commands and the setting I had initiated was ‘avoid’.

Sooah continued to race after the dancing sword like an angry bull but it dodged and evaded her as if it were child’s play.

“Huff huff.”

“It’s pretty fast. It looks almost fast enough for me to be unable

to catch it too.”

“If I only had my necklace on, I’m sure I would have caught it.”

She was not wearing her Redemption Necklace. Because there was no reason for her to have on any of her hunter gear while in the hostel.

“Why don’t you stop for now so we can see what else this thing... huh...? Wai...wait.”

“I got it!”

In the brief moment I wasn’t paying attention, she had thrown herself at the sword. For all her confidence, the sword was still able to slip out of reach at the last moment. Having lunged into the air with abandon, she was about to crash right onto me.

Crash!

“Kyaaa...!”

But right before she did, I shifted a bit to dodge that bit of disaster. Sooah, not so lucky, tumbled across the floor until she slammed to a stop against the wall. The a cacophony of noise rang out all throughout the hostel.

“Hey! Are you trying to bring the building down!”

“....Couldn’t you just catch me that one time?”

Sooah whimpered with tears welling up in her eyes.

“I was going to catch you but.”

“But what?”

“Lunging at me with such bloodlust in your eyes – anyone would have dodged you.”

“Pft. Anyway. I’ll be going into my room now.”

I chuckled a bit as I watched her walk away while muttering some things under her breath before I turned to grab the sword. Using it was fairly simple. If I just give it a simple command, it would follow that command.

While I only used a preprogrammed command as a test, the manual explained that the dancing sword would also be able to understand other commands in a sentence structure as well.

Additionally, the sword would be able to attack in infinite patterns with the freedom to move in the air.

I kept testing the sword out from here and there in the room, but I was unable to unlock the full potential just in this way.

I needed to perform a stress test that would be similar to a real battle.

And Sooah was the perfect candidate to help me out in that respect. That girl, she's never available when she's needed.

Anyway, what in the world is she up to that she's so quiet?

Is she sleeping?

"What are you doing? I'm coming in."

Creak.

I opened the door to her room.

\*\*\*

I sat on the sofa and turned on the television. The male anchor on the screen was loudly going on about something or another.

But none of that was registering.

The only thing running through my head was the image of Sooah, clad in her underwear, putting on her equipment.

And that equipment, of all things, was the Chongmal garter belt.

Her underwear, matching her garter belt, was also all black. Physical fitness, a requirement for all porters, was evident in her firm and well formed thighs.

And her tight round buttcheeks....

“Haa....”

I let out a sigh without even realizing it.

It was the first time I had seen her in those garter belts. There was no reason for me to have ever seen them since she always wears them inside her armor.

And I think it might be better if I don't see them again.

If anything, it would be better for me to not see it again just so that I can be objective and not change my view of her.

Creak.

“Did you see?”

Sooah asked with just her head poking out of the doorway.

“No. Not anything.”

“Liar.”

“Fine, I saw. What do you want. It was an accident.”

“If you saw, you need to take responsibility. Are you going to just wash your hands of this even after you’ve seen a grown lady in her underwear?”

“Hey, is this the medieval times? The 22nd century is right around the corner. Making a big deal out of me seeing a wee bit of skin. You didn’t even have much to look at.”

“Really? Then I guess it’ll be ok for me to show you a bit more then.”

What the hell is with this girl. Surely she doesn’t mean to come out like that.

No. No no. I can see the corners of her lips slanting up.

Can she see me sweating?

“If you do anything weird, I’m going to get really mad.”

“What if I do..”

“I’m never going to talk to you again.”

“Hmph, I already mentally prepared myself for that.”

She stepped out out of the doorway. I turned my head around and quickly closed my eyes.

“What are you doing?”

“I am putting in my best efforts to preserve our relationship the way it is.”

“Haa, it’s fine. Just look.”

“What? If it’s something weird I’ll really get mad.”

With a little bit of expectation mixed in with a little bit of dread, I opened my eyes.



# Chapter 91

---

Standing before me, she was dressed in her Arachne leather armor and had on her Redemption necklace. On her hip, she had her Bastard sword.

She was staring back at me, fully garbed in her hunter gear.

“What’s this? Why are you all dressed in your hunter gear?”

“Because it’s obvious exactly what you were thinking. Let’s go. You want to test your new weapon right? There’s no point in testing it out without my gear.”

“Were you always this quick thinking?”

“I’m not an idiot. Give me some credit ok?”

She gave a smirk before walking towards the hostel door while dusting her armor off.

“Here, take this.”

I passed her a long cloak that had been hanging on the wall.

“What’s this for?”

“If you walk around dressed like that in this neighborhood, something bad is bound to happen to you. Use common sense.”

The man to woman ratio at the West Sea City was completely off. It was almost 9 to 1.

This meant it was very easy for a female hunter to get into trouble...even more so if she were to be dressed in armor that hugged every curve as hers did.

There were too many men in this city who were lacking in morals.

“Ho? Are you showing some jealousy? Possessiveness, perhaps?”

“That’s not it ok?”

It was because I didn’t need some unnecessary trouble to happen when it can be easily prevented. There was even that time when Sooah and Yeonkyoung stirred trouble at the market with that weasel and his crew. But I can’t deny that I did feel a little something. Maybe it was a bit of jealousy. Anyway.

If I wanted to upgrade the dancing sword again, I would need another 500 ores.

The ores I had left (invested in my manual) was 676. I decided to first gather enough ores to upgrade my manual first before I performed a second upgrade on the dancing sword.

“Where are we going?”

“Just follow me. I don’t want us to practice in an area with lots of people and end up becoming a spectacle.”

“I was just curious hehe.”

I don’t know why she was so happy but she was smiling ear to ear the entire time we traveled to our destination.

It was about 20 minutes of walking after leaving the city that we finally found an empty area.

Since there weren’t any monsters in this area, it made sense there wouldn’t be any hunters either.

“This spot looks good. If someone were looking this direction from far away, they won’t even notice we’re here.”

This area was like a plain with few grass and trees. If there were any suspicious characters or monsters nosing around, we would be able to spot them right away. It was really not a bad place for some training.

Sooah looked around for a minute before she hugged the cloak around herself and said.

“Humm...what are you trying to do after bringing me to such a remote and empty place like this?”

“This.”

I brought out a level 1 bow from my manual. This was something I had stored specially for Kelby to eat. Since it was an extra item, it didn't take up a slot in my manual.

And aside from this item, I had a few more in storage that were broken.

“Can I really shoot you?”

“It's fine. With your skill, I could easily dodge anything you shoot at me. I just want to see just how good the dancing sword's defensive skills are so don't worry and shoot.”

Nod.

She held the bow I handed off to her and pulled back the drawstring.

Though she didn't have any real experience shooting with a bow and arrow, we were only 10 meters apart.

At this distance, even an absolute beginner should be able to hit their target.

“I’m going to shoot now.”

“Whenever you’re ready.”

Ping!

The arrow flew at me with a frightening speed. It might have been because she was strong but even without any archery skills, she was able to shoot one scary ammo. If I didn’t concentrate, I was sure I would find myself with an extra unwanted hole somewhere.

Ting!

But almost immediately the dancing sword parried the arrow away.

It was a pretty fast and strong arrow, but the sword was able to block it easily. I had a feeling the sword would be able to block at least level 2 attacks.

I made her shoot the arrow several times with different speed. But after confirming the sword continue to parry them all time and time again, I had her change tactics to a frontal assault.

Sooah took the level 3 bastard sword off her belt and held it up.

After telling the dancing sword to defend me, I stood in front of her.

I was a bit more frightened than before this time around. If I felt the sword couldn't block her attack, I needed to act quick and dodge her myself so I needed to be all the more focused.

Even if it was me, I knew I wouldn't escape unscathed if I were to receive a direct hit from someone wearing the Redemption Necklace that allowed her to copy my ability – speed in this case.

“Why don't you start out attacking me using all the techniques you have. I want to know the extent of this sword's abilities.”

“I'll start slow then.”

“I'll leave it to you.”

“Ok! Haaaa!”

Slam.

She hit the ground hard as she jumped up into the air.

I thought she said she would start out slow....?

Clang!

The bastard sword and dancing sword clashed violently.

I worried that one or both of the blades would shatter but, surprisingly, the dancing sword was able to parry the ferocious attack made by Sooah with no issues – though it did get pushed back a bit.

But it was enough to shock Sooah so much that it kept her from making an immediate second attack.

“This...this doesn’t make any sense? I literally put all my strength behind that blow.”

“I mean...so why did you go...um...from the start...”

“If I go easy on you, the test won’t be a test.”

Sooah said with a bit of emotion mixed in her voice.

Did I do something wrong again?

Anyway, thanks to her help, I was able to finish the test on the sword’s defense and offensive abilities successfully. Put simply, the dancing sword was able to defend against even a level 4 attack.

We also confirmed that the dancing sword was unable to respond if Sooah were to copy my speed and move as fast as she could.

But since there aren't too many people who would be able to move that quickly, I wasn't overly concerned about that point.

I did find one thing that was lacking with its offensive ability. Since it was 'blunt' after all, cutting something was a foregone conclusion...it would only be able to deliver blunt force attacks.

I had it try and attack Sooah, but it was unable to hit her even once so I had her take off her Redemption necklace and try the test again.

This time, I told the sword to attack the 'armor' instead and it was finally able to get a few attacks in. Since her armor as the level 3 Arachne armor, she didn't get hurt at all.

For now I would just have to make do with its defensive ability being the key point of the weapon.

Trying out different methods and fighting scenarios to fully understand the sword helped the time fly by.

Without even realizing it, almost two hours had passed.

"Should we keep at it? I'm kind of hungry."

"Let's stop here. I feel like we pretty much found out everything we need to know about this thing anyway."



I brought Kelby out.

“Why’d you bring him out?”

“Ah, to feed him this.”

I gave the level 1 bow we had used during practice to the fella.

Chomp Chomp Gnash!

“Ah, such a waste. It was probably worth 100k.”

“No you can’t think of it that way. This guy has an important role in keeping everyone on the party safe. It’s an investment.”

Seeing Kelby eat the bow with such vigor really stirred my appetite.

Ignoring Sooah’s excited clamor to eat alone, I called everyone else and we headed over to where they were.

# Chapter 92

---

Jongsawon and the rest of the bike enthusiasts were still at the motorcycle store.

“Party head.”

Han Joonseok said, the first one to realize I was there.

“Did you guys find anything good?”

“Yes, we found a few that would be suitable to ride even on unpaved roads. I figured if we were going back to the forest, we would need bikes that would be able to move quickly in that landscape rather than one to stow in the truck.”

“Good thinking.”

Though we were there only for a brief time, it was quite apparent that mobility would be an issue with just the truck alone.

The narrow forest pathways were restricted even further by the growing branches of the trees.

The roads that our truck would be able to drive through were limited.

We definitely needed a different mode of transportation for that

reason.

But there weren't too many of our party who could ride a bike. Park Hanbum and Jong Sawon could ride one skillfully.

Han Joonseok and Cho Youngoo knew how to ride from their time delivering chicken, but riding one on the unpaved roads of the forest was a different matter altogether.

So what he had chosen was an ATV, All Terrain Vehicle – a vehicle that would be able to traverse across all terrain.

It was a four wheel bike that could be seen in many a touristy areas.

“With this, even someone who isn't used to riding a bike would be able to get around. They even have two seater vehicles for those who aren't comfortable driving at all. They can just ride shotgun in the passenger seat.”

“Well, let's just keep it in mind as an option for now. We might not even have to go back to the forest area for a while.”

If I were to be completely honest, I hoped we wouldn't have reason to go back there.

The main reason being because fighting against humans has a much higher risk factor than fighting against monsters.

Though the reward was that much higher as well, what use is all that money if you were dead?

Ring ring ring-

As we were headed to go eat, my cell began to ring.

I glanced at it to see that it was Lieutenant Sohn Aram. I sent everyone else to go ahead to the restaurant while I took the call.

She was quiet for a moment. Unable to wait a second longer, I spoke first.

“Is there anything wrong?”

-[That is...I have a sort of difficult request to ask of you.]

“What sort of request...?”

-[Would you be able to accompany me to the forest?]

I immediately said no. There was no reason for us to go. But what she said after that made me halt mid-step.

Lieutenant Aram was hand selected by the inspector to head the Forest Research Committee, and one of her duties involved hiring

the appropriate hunters to explore the area.

I couldn't shake off the feeling this all happened because of the bulletin I had posted.

Because of that bulletin, we forced the police's hand and someone had to go explore the validity of that posting. Since no one volunteered to enter the dangerous forest, they had chosen her.

"So...I guess this is pretty much my fault."

-[It isn't entirely your fault. And it wasn't my goal to use your guilt to force you to join me. But it is the truth that you are the only person I thought would be of any help on this task.]

"Hm. It's a bit difficult for me to make my decision immediately. I'll meet with my party members and discuss the situation with them first before I commit to an answer."

-[I will await a positive response.]

I never imagined things might end up this way. I expected that we would be able to get some more rest while we pondered the issue of the Chinese hunters and awaited updates from our bulletin. Since we had earned quite a bit of money, we would have had the freedom to do so.

But this changed things – accelerated our plans quite a bit. In fact, they were scheduled to explore the forest by tomorrow;

meaning I had to make my decision by today. Would my party members be up for going back into the forest?

\*\*\*

“I want to go.”

“We have to go.”

“It would be better to go.”

“...”

Instead of answering, Jong Sawon just nodded his head in agreement with everyone else.

It was a unanimous decision to go. It seemed I was the only reluctant one of the group.

“I have said this several times, but I will say it again. It might become dangerous in there.”

“Why are you worrying so much? Were we ever not in any danger? I don’t know why you are always stressing danger as if we can’t take care of ourselves?”

Sooah said as she stared at me.

“Because this isn’t a decision we should make lightly.”

I was concerned that no one was taking this seriously. One wrong move and it could mean a life lost.

No one knows just how many enemies could be hiding within the forest.

Han Joonseok spoke up.

“I can understand why you are worried. But we are all hunters here. We are all aware of the dangers we face and the dangers we could face at any moment.”

“I feel like Sunbeh Oppa only thinks of us as children or people you have to take care of.”

“Haha, are you saying you can’t trust us that much?”

At their responses, I could feel the heat rising to my cheeks as they turned a bright red.

They were right.

Each and every one of them were fellow hunters, not people I had to look after as if they were my children.

“Anyway, even though I don’t like that Sohn Aram lady, since this happened because of us, I think it’s only right that we take responsibility.”

“But are we going to be paid for this? I mean, we can’t lend ourselves out for free. Right?”

“I will call her and ask.”

-[I’m sorry but...we can only pay 2,000 per person.]

“Isn’t that the same thing as not paying us anything?”

-[Haa, this is all we can do with our budget. Can you understand better now why I contacted you instead of other hunters?]

I had expected that they wouldn’t be paying us much. But 2,000 was a bit harsh. Even if they were to hire level 1 hunters, they would have had to pay more than that.

“The price is too low. It would be difficult for me to persuade my party members with that amount.”

-[Can’t we work something out? I know this is a favor but...]

If she needed to, she could have forced me to come for that low fee by playing on my guilt. Her not doing that was considerably



attractive to me.

My team wanted to help, and so did I. But we could not do it for free. And 2,000 was the same thing as free. We needed to be paid in some way or another that matched our worth.

“Would it be possible for us to get some ores out of this deal then?”

-[Ores? Why on earth...]

# Chapter 93

---

“I heard that the ores being sold to the hunter market are being handled by the police. If you can hand over some of those ores to us, we would be more than happy to join the mission.”

-[As I said before, our budget is limited. We wouldn't be able to do so even if we wanted to.]

“That's fine. I'll put up the money as long as you can pass along as much of the ores we need.”

-[...Is that it?]

“More than enough for me.”

\*\*\*

Stuck between a rock and a hard place, I knew she would take this to her superiors. And they, in turn, will most likely go along with my offer.

And if that happens, I would finally have access to the alanite ores so that I could perform fusions to my heart's desire.

This was huge. And this would allow us to be well armed for a fight against the Chinese hunters – if it came to that.

“I have one more thing to ask of you.”

-[Which is?]

“I want to request that we be the only hunters that you move with for this task.”

-[Hm...I guess since our budget is limited, that would have been the case anyway. Is there any reason why you are requesting this?]

“You’ll see when the time comes. And...you cannot reveal what you see about us to anyone else.”

-[If it isn’t totally illegal then...ok.]

If we were to go on this task with her, for the good or bad, she will be privy to Team Delta’s secret. Dead bodies will evaporate... we wouldn’t be able to hide her from that fact.

Immediately after I hung up, I called Park Hanbum, Bae Yeonkyoung, and Manager Kim and asked them to return.

-[Come by tomorrow? Is there some kind of emergency we don’t know about?]

“Yes, we will have to go into the forested area.”

-[Hm...do we have to?]

“I will explain in detail once you are back.”

I felt a bit bad for giving them 3 days off and then asking them to return only after one, but the situation warranted it. I couldn't do anything about it. Manager Kim let out a sigh and said.

-[I'm sure I won't hear the end of it from the wife. I was hoping to go on a family trip this time around.]

“I'm really sorry.”

-[No, it's fine. Then I'll see you tomorrow.]

I had worried the most over Manager Kim's response, but he was really understanding about the whole thing. Surprisingly.

And the remaining two members said they would be right back without any other objections.

\*\*\*

The next day, the entire Team Delta met up and headed towards the market. The forest was full of dangers.

We needed to purchase some equipment so that we can

strengthen ourselves against those dangers. Since each person had at least 3 million dollars each, we would be able to equip ourselves with level 4 gear.

And if one were to purchase a no name equipment, they could even buy a level 5.

“I’m Lieutenant Sohn Aram. A pleasure to meet you all.”

“What kind of armor is that?”

“Haha...it’s a bit...um...”

She was donned with a level 2 leather armor that hugged her body. It looked like standard issue armor for the police.

“It looks too cheap.”

“I can’t do anything about it. Even this is something I had to pretty much beg for.”

If they were creating a special mission, shouldn’t they have at least taken care of their own so that they would be safe? But then again, even that armor was probably worth close to 300k. It seems my standard on money, value, and equipment has gone way up from even just a few months ago.

“Then will we be able to purchase some ores as we were

promised?”

“I did get the approval from upstairs. You just need to come with me.”

I left the party members to continue searching the market for equipment to upgrade their gear while I followed Sohn Aram to purchase the alanites.

Unfortunately, I was only able to get my hands on 9, which was enough to fuse and create just 3 level 4 items.

This wasn't unexpected since drop probability of the rare alanites from level 1 and level 2 monsters was very low.

I took the level 3 Valladolid bow that Yeonkyoung had as well as some other items worth 500k each to fuse together for the Athena's bow.

“Is it ok even though the bow has the option of not being able to hurt humans?”

Yeonkyoung asked me shyly. This was because we had to fight more than just monsters very soon.

The Athena's bow could not harm another human.

But there is a loophole.

“If you need to hit a person, you can enchant an arrow and shoot it.”

“Ah. Is that so?”

Yeonkyoung nodded her head with a serious face. The Athena's bow can attack without the need for any arrows. But if you arm the bow with you own arrow and shoot it, the option for not harming humans is cancelled. This was a well known fact even at the market.

I pondered for a moment where I should use the rest of the alanites before deciding to just create two more Athena's bows and selling them on the market.

Just from those sales, we had earned close to 1.3 million dollars. Not bad.

I now had a total of 11.5 million dollars in my account.

Starting from level 6, the item prices jump up tremendously.

The average price was usually about 7-8 million each.

If you were to purchase something on the expensive side, they could go for even 10 million dollars.

After wondering if I should buy two level 5 items or just 1 level 6 item, I decided to go with the latter and chose to purchase the level 6 black plate armor.

The entire armor was all black and shined as if it had imbibed oil. While its defensive abilities were at an even keel of level 6, it came with an extremely attractive option.

\*\*\*

Black Plate Armor (6): Can create a shadow whose offensive abilities is half of the wearers' power. Should the shadow be shot, it will disappear. Cooltime per use is 1 minute.

\*\*\*

Put simply, it was like adding an extra member to the party. Though it disappears after a hit, even as a shadow, it would be able to deal damage to an enemy...and with half my strength at that.

Since it was like creating another version of me, this was a super cheat option.

And the price was ridiculous too.

“10 million dollars.”

“So damn expensive.”



“I’m sorry?”

“No, nothing. It was nothing.”

I hurriedly shook my head and purchased the armor. This was the first time I had spent this kind of money at the market.

My account now only had 1.3 million dollars remaining.

Though this was still a good amount of money, I somehow had the feeling that I’ve become oh so very poor in the blink of an eye.

Human beings are funny that way. Even just a few months ago, I was worried about my rent and electricity bill...and now I was thinking I was poor even with 1.3 million dollars in my account.

I put away the level 3 no name armor into my storage. I made a note in my head to keep it for Kelby to eat instead of selling it at the market.

It seemed that everyone else had also done the same and used pretty much all of their earnings in purchasing quality equipment. Those lacking in defense purchased some armor while those who lacked in offensive ability purchased weapons.

Finally, there was one more thing we had to buy.

And this was none other than a translating hat.

“For Chinese, it will be 100k.”

“Yes, but is this the only design you have?”

I asked the employee with a pained voice as I looked at the North Korean style army cap with a red star stitched smack dab in the middle.

“Yes, we only have this design for the Chinese transla....”

“I guess there’s nothing we can do then.”

It was expensive but, seeing that we would be fighting against Chinese hunters one way or another, this was something we would need.

Now I only had 300k left.

I decided to think it was lucky that I even had that left.

In addition to all this, we even purchased the ATV and another truck. We decided to have Park Hanbum and Manager Kim take turns driving the second truck.

After we finished getting ready, we started our 10 hour drive

towards the forest and finally arrived at the bridge.

And there, our way was blocked by something we did not factor in.

# Chapter 94

---

“Isn’t that Ezekiel?”

Cho Youngoo, who had been driving the truck, asked aloud. Han Joonseok, riding shotgun, squinted his eyes for a moment before nodding his head.

“You’re right, it looks like Ezekiel is blocking the entrance to the bridge.”

“Have they still not fixed that damn bad habit of theirs?”

“What should we do?”

Han Joonseok turned around in his seat to ask me. We were already driving towards them.

And, having noticed us already, I could see they were moving quickly to do something.

There is no way they would let us pass without a fight.

There was only one option left for us. To break through with force – just as we had done the last time.

“Can I please ask what is going on?”

Sohn Aram asked as she looked pointedly in the direction of the bridge.

There were almost 20 Ezekiel hunters camped out at the edge of the wooden bridge.

“They are blocking the way to the bridge so that no one else can pass through.”

“I thought the situation might not be favorable but all sorts of things are happening aren’t they?”

“If they do not let us pass, what are we going to do?”

“Can I step forward as an officer of the law?”

“And if they don’t back down even at that point?”

“That’s....”

Sohn Aram let out a very deep sigh. Even though she was an officer, there was only so much that one person could do.

“Then we have no choice but to turn back.”

“We can also break through using force.”

“Let me first try and resolve this peacefully.”

“Be my guest.”

But I couldn't let her walk over there on her own.

We parked the truck and, geared up from head to toe, we carefully got out of the truck. On either side of Sohn Aram, Cho Youngooi and I stuck by her as her bodyguards.

On the opposite side, a hefty hunter was leisurely headed in our direction as well.

I used my manual to check out his stats and gear.

\*\*\*

Name: Koo YongSung

Skill: Cleaving (3), Can cut through enemies within a 2 meter radius. During casting time, will only receive half the damage.

Option: None

Proficiency: 45

Equipment: Chain lance (3), Stone armor (3)

\*\*\*

He was entirely level 3. If it was before, I would have been pretty worried by now. But now, he was not much of an opponent.

“What’s the matter?”

“We need to pass through, I’m afraid.”

Sohn Aram answered. Koo Yongsung snorted as if we had made a joke.

“This land is claimed by us Ezekiel. We can’t let just anyone pass.”

“And who gave you the authority to claim the land?”

“Who? We came here first so it’s ours.”

Sohn Aram turned to look at me. I lightly shook my head.

“That’s a lie. They weren’t here just a few days ago. I think they probably saw the posting on the market bulletin and made their way here.”

“Heung, so what? What are you going to do about it?”

Sohn Aram pulled out a police badge and responded.

“I’d like to reintroduce myself. I’m Lieutenant Sohn Aram from the Mapo Police Station. You do not have the proper authority to lay claim to this bridge. Please step aside.”

“Hm?”

Koo YongSung’s face exploded with unexpected surprise. He hadn’t even dreamed that a police officer would show up here.

But that was it. After returning back to where his comrades were, he did not return.

And they didn’t open the way to the bridge either. It seems they decided it was better to just ignore us and the police than to say anything else.

“If you don’t step away, I will place all of you under arrest!”

Sohn Aram yelled out. But the only response to that was some laughter and jeering...and that was it.

“What did I tell you. I told you it wouldn’t work.”



“Haaa. Hunters. Really.”

“But we’re hunters too.”

“Ah, sorry about that. I didn’t mean it that way.”

“It’s alright. Anyway, now what do you propose we do? I really think there’s no other option but to use force.”

“Can you do it so that no one gets hurt?”

“Impossible. Short of fighting, there will always be someone hurt. If a fight does happen, I can’t promise what will happen – since we will be putting our lives on the line. And...if anyone makes it out of here alive...it will make things...difficult.”

“But aren’t there any other roads..”

“None.”

“Haaa.....”

I could see that Sohn Aram was having a heated debate inside her own head on what she should do. She was probably asking herself killing people on this mission was justified...all the more because she was an officer.

Unfortunately, with Ezekiel blocking the bridge, there was no way we were going to avoid a fight.

Our priority was to explore the forest. We couldn't turn back just because they decided to guard the entryway.

“Something's up over there.”

Cho Youngoo said. The hunters who had been just watching us from the bridge entrance were now in motion – getting into their vehicles.

“Are they trying to cross the bridge?”

Sohn Aram asked. If they were going to create an opening for us on their own, then that was great for us.

“We don't know yet. Mr. Han Joonseok, can you tell what's going on?”

“It seems they received some sort of communication. They made a call and then started to pile into their vehicles with hurried expressions.”

“It seems they ran into some trouble.”

“Yes, and I don't think it has anything to do with us.”

Hm. Just a minute ago I was ready to go into battle, but now...

The hunters had climbed into the vehicles that had been acting as barricades and disappeared...leaving only a cloud of smoke in their wake.

“What do you think it is?”

Sohn Aram, who had been watching quietly, finally asked.

“I want to go and ask myself, but it’s not as if they would answer me...there’s nothing else we can do but to just cross the bridge ourselves and find out.”

“Do you have even a guess....”

“They either met a strong monster or the Chinese hunters...and are now in a heated battle.”

“Which do you think it is?”

“I would say the probability of it being the latter is much higher.”

Even if it were the forest, there is no way that a strong monster would appear out of nowhere like that.

The fact was that only level 1 and level 2 monsters appeared in

the new land...and this included the forest. The only possibility was an irregular...but it's not as if irregulars come out all that often either.

“So now what?”

Han Joonseok took a few steps toward me and asked. If they ditched the bridge and ran off like that, it must have been a real emergency.

Whether it was an irregular or Chinese hunters, it didn't matter. We were going to check it out anyway...that was our mission.

“Let's follow them.”

Both trucks crossed over the creaky wooden bridge to the other side. I'm not sure if the Ezekiel team had done some additional work to the bridge, but it felt alot safer than the last time we used it.

We followed the path into the forest. Even if we didn't follow the trail they left behind, there were only a few roads their vehicles could drive through – so catching up to them was no hard task.

Bump. Bump.

“Heuk...my butt....”

Sooah complained the whole way as she tried to find the most comfortable position. Compared to the Southern Marshes, the roads here were definitely more tumultuous.

And since the seats set up in the back were wooden seats without any cushion...I could understand her pain.

“I should keep that in mind. To purchase some cushions.”

“Please dear lord.”

Sooah placed her hands under her butt in an effort to make the bumps a bit more bearable.

“Anyway, how many Ezekiel guys do you think are in the forest right now?”

“Since there were over twenty of them blocking the bridge....I’m sure there are quite a bit of them inside.”

“And things must be dangerous enough for them to have called in those guys.”

“Ezekiel is mainly known for having a great number of soldiers, and there is power in numbers. So I wouldn’t say it’s really a good bit of news that even with those numbers, they are being overwhelmed enough to have to call in reinforcements on barricade detail.”

“You know what else is weird? That there aren’t any monsters in the area.”

Han Joonseok looked around and said.

“I’m guessing that it’s going to be like this in all the areas that have paths wide enough for trucks to pass through.”

“Because they probably hunted all along these roads first right?”

“Ah. I see something up ahead.”

Han Joonseok shouted.

On the road up ahead, there was a dead body that was still bleeding out on the side.

I got out of the vehicle and checked it.

“It seems this person didn’t die too long ago. The blood is still fresh.”

“And who is it?”

“Ezekiel.”

There was a wheel badge on the corpse's uniform. This was Ezekiel's signia.

I picked up the body and placed it into the back of the second truck. He was stripped of equipment...most likely by his killer.

Sohn Aram looked at me and asked in confusion.

“What are you doing with the body...”

“I'll tell you later.”

# Chapter 95

---

As we continued driving along the path, the number of corpses we found began to grow. And we continued to stop at each dead body to pick them up and load them onto the truck.

Pretty soon, there were over 10 bodies in the truck.

They were all Ezekiel hunters.

“One thing’s for sure. This was definitely not a monster attack.”

I said this as I glanced at Sohn Aram. I’m sure she had a lot of questions, but she was doing a good job holding them back.

She must have felt my eyes on her because we met eyes. She lightly sighed before speaking.

“It seems things are more dire than I expected them to be.”

She continued as she started to press some things into her phone. It looked like she was looking for the camera app.

“What are you doing right now?”

“I’m trying to get some evidence. If something were to happen to me, at least I can leave behind some photographic proof. If we can find the Chinese hunters and prove that they were getting ready



for war, I can ask for reinforcements to be sent here.”

“It would be nice if they can send some people right now...”

At Sooah’s little comment, Sohn Aram made a slightly sour smile.

“If I ask for reinforcements and they don’t find anything here, I’ll get a negative mark on my record. Unfortunately, we’d need some real proof.”

“I’m sure we’ll come across that proof you need very soon.”

It was then that we discovered the truck that the Ezekiel who had left before us were riding in.

All we saw were a few dead bodies within the truck. It seems they were attacked right here.

“I’m pretty sure that the hunters who got out of the truck went deeper into the forest.”

Park Hanbum commented as he looked around.

Used to hunting solo, it seemed he was used to tracking and searching for evidence in the area.

“I think they were probably lured.”

“I agree. What should we do now?”

Were we going to move the truck in our way and continue down the path?

Or are we going to track and follow where the Ezekiel hunters had gone?

“I think it would be a smarter to follow into the forest and take care of them first instead of moving forward with the chance of being ambushed from behind.”

“I agree completely.”

We unloaded the ATV from the truck. Park Hanbum aside, everyone got onto the ATVs – 2 people per vehicle. Sohn Aram sat next to me on my ATV.

This was because she had the lowest defense among everyone in the party – I was the best person to keep her safe.

VROOOOM!

The 4 wheel drive bike made a roar as it raced into the forest. Park Hanbum led in front and I followed behind. Every once in a while, we would see dead bodies dotting the forest here and there.

Each and every corpse was an Ezekiel hunter.

“Was this really done by the Chinese hunters?”

Sohn Aram spoke with a bit of a stutter. She continued to take pictures with her phone’s camera raised up. This was all evidence.

“At the very least, I am sure this was done by a person.”

“....”

She seemed to say something, but I couldn’t hear what over the roar of the ATV. She seemed pretty shaken up.

Something like this has been happening elsewhere in the new land too. She must have known somewhere deep inside.

But knowing something and seeing something with your own eyes is an altogether different thing.

After racing for a good long time, we saw Park Hanbum taking a sharp left up ahead.

Swoosh!!!

Several arrows lodged into the ground where he had been earlier.

I hurriedly braked the ATV near the trees to the side.

“Please go to where Sooah is. She will protect you.”

Nod.

She ran towards Sooah with her arms covering her head. A few arrows flew in her direction.

I jumped up to knock them all away.

“Huh?”

“Don’t stand there like an idiot. Hurry and keep running!”

“Ah, understood.”

Sohn Aram shook her head and started running again.

Sooah should be able to handle these arrows with the Redemption Necklace without a problem.

I yelled out as loudly as I could.

“Initiate defense team!”

“Yes!”

This meant everyone on Team Delta except me, Jong Sawon and Park Hambum would get together to defend the entire team.

We had practiced a few scenarios such as this as Team Delta. It wasn't anything great, but it did allow us to act more quickly as a group in predetermined formations.

This was something I came up with after thinking how we could keep everyone safe in the case we were under attack by enemies we could not place.

After making sure the noncombatants and long range attackers were as safe as possible, Jong Sawon and I moved as the team strikers while Park Hanbum rode his bike to locate the enemy.

Piiiiing!

The arrows really starting hailing down now. They were serious. There were many more arrows that I anticipated raining down through the branches of the trees.

I pulled out the Smash Sword and blocked each and every arrow. It would be difficult to hit the fast moving Park Hanbum as well.

I worried a bit for Jong Sawon, but I saw him moving from tree to tree to minimize exposure to the arrows.

Krrrrrrrr!

It was then that I heard a roar echoing behind my back. The roar of a bear, no, the roar of a dragon?

Heat washed over me as a dragon breathing out plumes of flames passed by.

Crash!

“Kyaaaaa!”

Someone let out a bloodcurdling scream as a tree went up in a heap of flames.

Taken completely by surprised, when I turned around, Han Joonseok said.

“It should be fine right....that amount of fire?”

“That’s not the stalker.”

“I spent quite a bit of money this time around.”

He lifted up a bow that was etched with a drawing of a dragon.

Level 5 bow, Dragon killer.

This bow was known to shoot an arrow straight – destroying everything in its path. On top of that, since he had the the Explosion Quiver, every arrow he shot would deal extra damage by exploding upon impact. The combination of the two items turned an entire tree into a pile of ash.

I nodded my head before raising my hand into the air.

“Gnash! Snarl!”

As soon as Kelby appeared, I commanded it to run between the trees. It should be fairly difficult to deal any real damage to Kelby with just arrows.

Bae Yeonkyoung and Han Joonseok were in the back dealing long range attacks. Kelby, Jong Sawon and I were closing in with our aggressive offensive styles. And Jong Sawon was driving around on his bike to identify the location each enemy.

Seeing that we were much more formidable than they initially guessed, they immediately went into hiding.

Of course, this isn't to say that they didn't suffer any loss. There were 4 who had died just at my hands alone. Jong Sawon and Park Hanbum had killed one each as well.

Just when I figured there wouldn't be any survivors, save for

those who ran away, I saw Kelby dashing over to me with a hunter in his mouth.

He was in bad condition, but he was still breathing.

Coming a bit later, Park Hanbum said.

“It seems all of them pulled back.”

“Should we chase them?”

Han Joonseok asked.

“It could be a trap so there’s no reason to hurry. Our mission is to investigate – it is not to annihilate them. It might not even be feasible.”

“I guess. Since we don’t even know how many hunters there are.”

“Lieutenant Sohn Aram, can you please interrogate this guy?”

When I turned to look at her, she did not look so good.

“If it’s difficult to do now, we can wait to do it later.”

“No, I’ll do it. This sort of situation is new for me so I was just



taken by surprise.”

She looked worse than surprised. She was already in a bad state when she saw the corpses...I could only imagine what seeing people killed in front of her was doing to her.

Still, seeing that she was able to pull herself together fairly quickly, she wasn't weak.

“Oh yeah....please use this.”

I pulled out the translation hat from my storage. It was camo green with a large red star in the middle.

She put on the hat without a word. When I had put it on, it was pretty hilarious, but when she put it on...it somehow seemed like a fashionable item.

It seems the best accessory is a beautiful face.

# Chapter 96

---

After stripping our prisoner of all his equipment, we tied up the bleeding and muttering hunter before beginning our interrogation.

Soon after, Sohn Aram shook her head.

“He doesn’t know much. At Hwanghaedo, ah Hwanghaedo is what they call it. Anyway, he says that since Hwanghaedo is China’s land, there shouldn’t be any issues hunting here. Honestly, none of what he says matters. What’s important is the fact that we were able to confirm that they were Chinese hunters.”

She had already recorded the whole thing on her phone.

And immediately after, she saved it via Satellite for safekeeping.

“Were you able to find out where the enemy is stationed and how many of them there are?”

“He won’t answer.”

If it were me, I would do the same. Maybe she saw something in my eye, but she hurriedly added.

“You’re not thinking of torturing him or anything or you?”

“I’ve never done something like that before. And the thought

didn't even cross my mind. But I was thinking of making some threats at least."

I asked her to pass the translation hat and crouched in front of the Chinese hunter who was shivering from fear.

From the looks of him, I didn't think I would have to take things too far.

"Wang Ze Ming? Right?"

I was able to get that much from my manual.

His eyes turned as round as silver dollars as he stared at me. Even if he didn't say anything, it was obvious I surprised the crap out of him.

"Aren't you curious how I knew what your name is?"

"...It doesn't matter."

"Hm, I'm pretty sure it does matter. Because we've already known for some time that Chinese hunters had invaded this land. We know everything about all of you."

"Don't spout nonsense."

“Your skill...it’s a level 2 steal skill. No?”

“Huh??”

I must have surprised him even more this time because he almost hiccuped as he let out a harsh breath. I could see his eyes beginning to waver. I got him.

“Don’t, don’t make impossible claims. How could you know everything about all those people....”

This meant that there were a fair many hunters here. Their standards for “a lot of people” was on a different level than our own. This meant that there were probably at least several thousand of them...maybe even tens of thousands of them.

Thinking about this new revelation...it made me want to go further in even less.

“Anyway, by telling you even this much you should know that my words are true to some degree...I’m sure you have a lot of questions. But before that, why don’t you answer some of mine. How did you get here?”

Whether he rode a boat or a plane, it didn’t make sense that they were able to cross into Korea’s land without being detected.

Even now, the Aegis defense weapon was constantly patrolling the waters around the Yellow Sea, and we had a high powered

radar always on.

“...I don’t know.”

Talk about crappy acting. It was so bad that anyone could tell he was lying.

“You say don’t know? Well, I guess that’s too bad then. I guess we have no choice but to just ask someone else.”

Shrug.

As I said this, I unsheathed the Smash sword and held it in both hands. Wang Ze Ming’s face turned a shade of blue as he looked back and forth between me and my sword.

He was probably having a heated debate in his head. Should he sell out? Or should he give up some little piece of info to save his own neck?

It didn’t matter what he did. Because I had no inclination to set him free.

I now raised the blade a foot above his head.

“Wa, wait. I’ll tell you. I said I’ll tell you.”

“If you don’t want to, you don’t have to.”

“I said I’ll tell you! Shit! Ask me anything! As long as you let me live....you’ll let me live right?”

“Hm...depends on what you tell me.”

After that, he started spilling his guts about things I didn’t even ask him about.

“What do you think?”

“Well, I guess it’s not complete drivel.”

They were able to sneak in using fishing as a cover. With the emergence of the new land, there wasn’t as many fish in the waters as before. And so, in turn, those who regulate the fishing have become complacent.

Fishing boats were small enough to not be picked up by the radar, and even if someone were to spy them...they just assumed they were just harmless fishing boats.

The problem was, there were now over 3000 of them who had invaded our part of the new land in this way.

I let out a sigh and look at Wang Ze Ming.

“Why in the world did the government in China decide to do this?”

“It wasn’t the government. We, the ChungHo, move of our own accord.”

Chungo referred to the organization of Chinese Hunters who have invaded the new land on this side.

“I feel like you were just instructed to say that.”

“I’m just a footsoldier. I don’t know anything beyond that.”

He didn’t deny it. Just as he said, he was only a level 2 hunter so I’m sure he wouldn’t be privy to the more sensitive information.

He was probably just doing whatever he was told from up top. But that didn’t mean that it was forgivable for him to come onto our land and hunt our people.

“Lieutenant, Sohn Aram, how would you like to take care of this guy?”

“I need to book him first then turn him over to the central government. This guy’s testimony is better if confirmed in person than just recorded via video.”

“Then let’s take steps to take him and return.”

Our enemy was over 3000 men strong. Even though they were spread over a vast land, just the sheer number of enemy hunters was foreboding.

“That’s....I think that is going to be a bit difficult.”

“What?”

“I was told to find out where the enemy is before returning.”

“What kind of reckless command is that?...”

Sohn Aram flipped to her phone and showed me the screen.

Find out the enemy’s location and how many of them there are. Support troops are being organized.

No matter how I looked at it, this sounded like a death sentence to me. They were basically giving us the same support as a spoon and fork...and asking us to save the country.

“Let’s ignore that. It’s better than dying. All we need to do is take this guy back. That should be enough to get something going.”

“Well, that’s not all.”



“What?”

“If I don’t take more concrete proof, the people upstairs won’t do anything. They’ll say they can’t move blindly and will need more.”

“Wouldn’t it be better for us to post something on the market bulletin again?”

At Sooah’s words, Sohn Aram shook her head.

“Regular hunters are not ready. You guys are just a special case..most hunters are low level. What are you going to do if we post that and a bunch of hunters die? Is that what you want?”

# Chapter 97

---

“I’m sorry to say this but my team’s safety is much more important to me than the safety of hunters I don’t even know.”

“Then I guess I can’t persuade you to do otherwise.”

She got up from her seat and picked up her bag.

“Surely you’re not trying to go in by yourself?”

“What? I never said anything of the sort. I’m not crazy...”

Sooah started cracking up.

“And what’s so funny over there?”

“No, I just remembered the time you came to save me. I really thought you were a crazy person that time.”

“Hm.....”

“Something like that happened? Very interesting.”

Manager Kim said as he stroked his chin. All of a sudden it felt as if the way everyone viewed me changed ever so slightly.

“Old man, did you think I was some psychopathic killer or something?”

“No, nothing that bad....I just thought you were someone who didn't bleed or cry tears.”

“Same thing! Let's just pack up all the items and leave this place. I don't think we have any further need to stay here any longer.”

“Item?”

Sohn Aram spoke up in confusion. I didn't feel like I needed to explain any more. Because if we leave like this, we probably wouldn't run into her again.

“Ah, I meant equipment.”

I said vaguely as I got up from my seat.

It was then.

Taaaang!

It felt something strike the back of my head. It felt as if something cold and sharp had struck me.

My first thought was that it was an unpleasant sensation.

“Kyaaaak!”

A bullet had been shot through my head.

My vision blurred into red as the ground rushed up to meet my forehead. I fell to the ground.

It was as if I was intoxicated.

Bam!

I didn't feel any pain. It just felt as if I was being sucked into a dark void. I wondered if I was dying.

But being able to even think like this was proof that I wasn't dying.

The world started coming back into view.

Skill 'Immortality'.

The skill that allowed me to come back to life one time in a day no matter the cause of death had activated.

As if nothing had happened, my body was returned to normal.

“Huh?”

Sooah stared at me with a stony face.

Then her eyes rounded as if she had just seen a ghost.

I just slightly lifted my head and spoke. Because if I were to get hit by another bullet – there would be a big problem.

“Snap out of it.”

“Sunbeh oppa?...You didn’t die?”

“You sound like you wanted me to die?”

“No, no that’s not it.”

“We need to hurry and locate the sniper first ok?”

Bam!

I jumped up from the ground like a spring.

“Huh?”

It was very small, but someone had let out a sound of surprise.

Good. I'm sure I shocked that noise out of them after coming to life even when they confirmed a kill shot. But I couldn't tell their exact location yet. I just started running towards the general direction of the sound.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

I wove in and out between trees as quickly as possible. But he remained quiet.

He probably chose to remain hidden rather than make a shot that misses among the thicket of trees...which could reveal his location.

I needed to think of some other way to lure him out. It might be a bit dangerous but this was the only way.

I exposed my body ever so slightly.

As if he was just waiting for this moment, a bullet came flying at me.

Taaang!

Ping!

It hit the left shoulder of my armor and bounced right off. Firearms are of no consequence to items.

Though it is true that hunters don't use firearms too much because of the government restrictions, it is also not used that often because there is little use for them.

First, being caught with a firearm was an automatic prison sentence. But the most important part was that firearms did not have much use against monsters.

The only dangerous aspect of firearms came into play if you were to be hit in an area not protected by armor.

A shiver ran down my spine.

I almost died. Just now.

"I got you now. You piece of shit."

I was finally able to locate the sniper after the second shot. I spied the sniper hiding between some branches of a tall tree.

Immediately after identifying the location of the threat, I climbed 20 meters up the tree in an instant and grabbed the sniper by the neck.

"Here you are."

Woosh!

He quickly pulled out a small dagger from a strap on his thigh and brandished it menacingly at me.

From his movements, he was either military or a hunter with a military background.

Crack!

That was the sound of his wrist bone splintering.

“Heuk!”

He used his remaining hand to aim his gun at me before firing a shot.

Taaang!

The shot split the air harmlessly. There was no way he was going to be able to shoot me while in such an awkward position.

The gun was Russian – modified for sniping. It was a famous model that even I was able to recognize.

I snatched the gun from him as I delivered a powerful fist to his face.

Crash!



About 80kg of weight fell 20 meters straight down.

I didn't want to imagine what state he was in now.

“Keuk....”

But, even though there was a small crater from the impact of his fall, he had not died.

I guess he had an item that absorbed most of the shock from the fall.

Now that I looked at him again, he had on a level 3 armor. He was lucky. Otherwise, all of his bones would have shattered into millions of pieces from that attack.

“Hm...I see you're not dead yet. But then again, you were able to get a shot at me so I wouldn't expect anything less.”

“Keuk....how the hell did you....?”

“None of your business.”

Then I stepped on his right hand. Now he had none.

Squash!

“Kyaaaaa!”

That’s what you get for trying to reach for that damn dagger again.

As his bones splintered, they began to rip through the flesh. It was gross to look at but this much was repairable if you had the right amount of money.

I heard that level 10 healers could even restore limbs that have been permanently lost. Truth be told, I haven’t seen it myself.

Since I haven’t seen it broadcast on the news or tv either, I guess no one actually tried testing it out.

“Kyaaaaak!”

He didn’t stop screaming. He’s much more of a baby than I expected.....jeeez!

Barrf!

He began to vomit black blood and died before I could even get started.

“What the hell....”

Hunters are known to usually do what is in their best interests.

I'm sure this would have been the same for the Chinese because who would want to invest tons of money into hunter grade equipment....and then die for a cause that wasn't their own?

I couldn't believe that the Chinese government would ask their hunters to commit suicide....and I further couldn't believe that Chinese hunters would even obey such a command.

First things first, I picked up the dead body and headed towards my party members.

As soon as she saw me, Sooah started running towards me with a handkerchief in hand. She then proceeded to wipe my face.

Seeing it come off with black blood stains, it seemed the dead guy's blood had splattered onto my face without my realizing it.

"I thought I was going to die from shock."

"It's your fault for forgetting about my new skill."

"Who the hell would remember all of the things you can do? And even if I did remember it, there isn't anyone on earth who wouldn't have been shocked by what happened."

“I guess, I can’t say I wasn’t surprised a bit myself.”

“See.”

Sooah said loudly as she nodded her head. Everyone else in the party looked equally upset....while Park Hanbum and Sohn Aram who didn’t know anything about my skill looked even more so.

“But what happened to him?”

“He’s dead. Suicide.”

“What.....”

Han Joonseok had a very uncomfortable expression on his face when I said it was suicide.

I turned into the direction of Wang Ze Ming, who was still tied up tightly, and asked.

“Do you have a poison ampoule in your mouth too?”

“Yeah right. What if I accidentally bit down? Then what? There isn’t anyone among us crazy enough to do something like that.”

“There’s one right here. Hello.”

I pointed at the dead body on the side. Wang Ze Ming just shook his head.

“What kind of a hunter would put an order above his own life? I wouldn't. And I know that none of the people I came here with would do the same.”

“So that's why you had no qualms over ratting out your comrades?”

“They would have done the same.”

His face turned a bright red. I'm sure he was ashamed of sharing this.

“Anyway. Enough with the chitchat. Do you know where this guy might be from? If what you're saying is true, he's not one of you....then who is he?”

# Chapter 98

---

“I’ve never seen his face in my life. But there are some hunters among us who are a bit off. Actually, now that I think about it, there are quite a bit of them.”

Wang Ze Ming looked at the corpse as he spoke. The dead don’t speak. But I can try to get some clues from his body.

Unlike other hunters, his clothing was relatively clean, he had well groomed hair, and he was in great physical shape.

This was very telling. Because hunters who rely on their skills and equipment don’t take the time to train their bodies – there’s no need.

Why? Because no matter how much they trained, most hunters believed that it would fall short of what an item is able to do. Aside from my effort skill, I wouldn’t say this was untrue.

For this reason, there were very few hunters who had well developed bodies like this.

On closer inspection, I could tell that he had trained for quite a long time.

I wondered if the Chinese government had sent in soldiers like this to hide among hunters and do what they couldn’t.

“What if he was a hunter who is part of the National Security Agency?”

“National Security Agency?”

“They don’t have something like that in Korea? You know...like a covert group?”

“Ah, something like NIS (National Intelligence Service)?”

“I heard rumors that there were a lot of people recruited for something like that...but I can’t be sure.”

“So then that’s one possibility, I guess.”

I don’t know just how much of Wang Ze Ming’s words I should believe. But I also don’t see why he would lie about something like this. Since he could have just said he didn’t know a thing.

“What are you guys talking about?”

Sooah walked closer to us and asked.

“He said that it might be someone part of a covert group sent by the National Security Agency...something similar to NIS in our country. Since they can’t just send in their military troops. I think they might have sent in some nameless soldiers who will be able to move independently. If that’s the case, it explains his skills as a

sniper. Above all, he had excellent marksmanship.”

It was a distance of about 50 meters from where he was hiding in the trees and where I had been shot. It wasn't that far, but what made it impressive was the fact that he was able to shoot accurately even with branches and foliage in the way. The branches were not still either. They swayed with the wind, making the shot even more difficult.

“Isn't that a big problem? It could incite national conflict.”

Lieutenant Aram's face became pale.

“I mean, the national conflict had already begun way before this. Naive.”

Manager Kim smirked. I agreed with him.

If they sent in hunters in this way, that meant they were already braced for an all out war.

“But there's still something I don't get.”

Han Joonseok, who had been silent in thought this whole time, spoke up. Feeling my stare, he said towards me.

“What are they trying to gain by doing something like this? The three countries in East Asia had been maintaining a friendly



relationship this whole time. So why now? It was the first time since the monsters first appeared that things have been so strained.”

“Well there was the whole North Korea situation too.”

As soon as Mr. Kim said this, Han Joonseok shook his head.

“That was something that we expected to happen. Of course some of us might still be upset of what happens, but since China absorbed North Korea when they kept threatening us with Nuclear bombs...you can’t be too mad.”

Honestly, China absorbed North Korea very easily. But you were to ask me if it benefited them in any way..I’d have to say no.

It was an incredibly small land and everyone on that last was pretty much in poverty.

“Could it be that they are just greedy for land? Isn’t there a saying about how it’s the people who have that always want more?”

Park Hanbum asked.

“I guess you can think like that but....it still doesn’t quite do it for me. I keep thinking that there was a reason they had to pretend to be congenial with our country while they invaded our part of the new land.”

He had something there. Something about this whole thing made me uneasy. Why did they need to invade the new land from behind?

And why did they need to send over 3000 hunters to do the job?

At first I thought they came to check out our hunters on our side, but if the NIS was sending men in as well...the reason must be more serious.

Why.....

I put all the clues to the forefront of my mind and thought.

“What is it that China wants at this very moment.”

Everyone considered this and started thinking. Sooah was the first to break the silence.

“Money.”

“Well, I’m in the same boat. Not that. Something more specific.”

“Chet....who on earth doesn’t want more money?”

“Supremacy.....no?”

Yeonkyoung said quietly. Speaking up after being silent the whole time....that wasn't a bad guess.

I nodded my head and said.

“China has wanted to increase their influence. But since they didn't want to be in a physical war, they used another method to achieve this – by boosting their economic status. And the reason they were able to do that...”

I went speechless for just a moment. I felt as if I almost had it.

Han Joonseok responded with a sigh.

“Booming food production.”

“There was a recent story about how there was a sharp decline in China's food production.”

As if she suddenly remembered something, Sohn Aram quickly intervened. It was something I had heard before too.

And I was directly involved.

“China had used the land around the dungeon, which allows plants to grow quickly, to produce and harvest many crops. They began to establish cooperative farms around the dungeon and stationed

several hunters there to promote safety. But when the level 1 and level 2 dungeons disappeared, things went south.”

“What does that have to do with any of this?”

Asked a frustrated Manager Kim.

That’s what I wanted to know. This was all speculation.

If we wanted to know more, we needed to do some more investigating.

# Chapter 99

---

I pulled out the Toyul Hammer and held it up.

“Did, did I say something wrong?”

“Ah, it’s not that. I just wanted to smash some trees right now.”

I pointed to the tree that Han Joonseok had burned up during our battle.

“Oh my, did you get scared Manager Kim?”

“Scared, who me?”

“Everyone can tell you got scared just now.”

“Shut it, you wench.”

“Ohhh...wench....you. Old. man. Should I give you a shoulder massage? I know I haven’t given you one in a long time.”

“I take it back! I take it back. AHhhhhhhaahk! I said I take it bacck!”

Slam!

The burned up tree that had been barely clinging on fell down in a heap of ash and splinters.

Sooah carefully walked up to it. Checking behind her, I saw Manager Kim mewling as he gingerly touched his shoulders.

It might seem like painful retribution, but her massages were actually very good at loosening up knots and muscles. There was a reason Manager Kim allowed her to perform her massages even though he was vocally against it.

“But what are you doing right now?”

“I’m checking for something...if what we’re thinking is really right or not. Let’s just wait one hour.”

The plants that grew immediately even after we cut them down time and time again in the Baeksapyoung Dungeon...I wanted to see if the same thing would happen here in the forest.

If I could just confirm this, then that would support our theory about China.

“I’m starting to get a bit scared....is it okay for us to get involved in something like this?”

“It’s fine isn’t it? Didn’t you want to do this? Become a hunter...

and a famous one at that?”

“I mean...yeah. But this would mean our opponents would be an entire country instead of just monsters...”

Kyyyyyaaaaa!

Suddenly we heard a monster’s cry coming from a distance. A red glow bled into the western sky as the sun began to set.

And I spied the small plant that began to grow from the very spot I had hacked down the burned up tree.

I checked the time. It had only been 50 minutes since the first tree had fallen. If I were to count the time since Han Joonseok had actually killed the tree by burning it...it would have been approximately one hour.

“If a new plant is growing after just an hour...that’s pretty fast.”

“It’s definitely not normal.”

“Since we confirmed what we wanted to confirm, we should head back.”

Sooah tied up Wang Ze Ming in a cocoon of webs and tied him to the back of the ATV.

He did end up being dragged on the ground behind the vehicle during our ride, but since he was safe inside the cocoon...he should be safe from harm – other than the occasional turbulence. We were able to collect two ores from the two dead bodies.

I put them both into the manual and headed towards the truck.

“Shit.”

The truck was gone. I cursed a bit before walking to where the truck and Ezekiel’s truck should have been.

“What should we do now?”

Han Joonseok asked. Though he was asking me, it was obvious from his tone that he didn’t want to just turn back to the city.

And, shit. I didn’t want to leave now either.

“Inside the truck....are all the items that would have dropped from the dead bodies. We can’t just let them have it like that.”

“Ah, you’re right. All of them added up will be quite a big loss.”

We had collected 15 corpses onto the truck. Since we were in a hurry, we weren’t even able to check if they were evaporating or not...but there should have been at least 2-3 items.



No way we were going to let them have that.

More than that though, the items that would have dropped would have been from the new system. Even if those items were low level items, I can't let new system items fall into anyone else's hands.

“Let's follow the trail.”

I released Kelby and had him follow the trail ahead of us. He would be able to track them better. But more than that, he would be able to alert us of any dangers faster than any human.

It was nice that he had the senses of a dog – it came in very handy.

So then we rode our ATVs and started out tracking our missing truck. We did see some monsters on the way, but we just ignored them.

We did kill the ones who decided to chase after us, but there were far more monsters who let us be.

It was only after continuing on our trail in this way for about 30 minutes that we finally spied some makeshift shelters built high in the treetops.

It looked like something straight out of a children's' book.

“What in the world...”

Was the only words that slipped out of Sooah’s mouth. The houses were built about 10 meters apart from one another in the treetops.

“Do you think there are elves in there?”

“Elves...I don’t think so.”

Elves are monsters that look very similar to humans aside from their large ears and pale skin. They are usually extremely thin, which is probably one of the reasons why they are able to move so quickly from tree to tree.

Another characteristic of the elves was that they had red eyes.

Since they lacked melanin, they preferred living in dark places like the woods or caves.

Though they didn’t die immediately from exposure to sunlight like vampires do, but too much sun did impact their health in the long run so you wouldn’t expect them to wander around in the daylight.

“But there aren’t any monsters besides elves that would build shelter in the trees.”

“That’s true...but it doesn’t look like something made by elves.”

The houses looked too makeshift to be the works of elves. I’ve never seen elven homes look anything as roughly made as that.

I would believe it if I were told that orks had made them. But orks do not build houses in this manner – instead they live in tents made of animal skin.

“You’re right. Elves wouldn’t have made their homes like that.”

Han Joonseok nodded his head in agreement.

Stories about elves are usually spun in a more positive light because, unlike orks and goblins, they more closely resemble humankind.

Of course, in reality, they are not blindingly beautiful and charming as they are portrayed in the movies.

If you were to see them in real life, it would feel as if you were only watching mannequins made out of wood in motion.

This was because you do not feel the different emotions and feelings you get from humans from these elves.

It was true that elves resembled humans the most out of all

monsters, but that was where the similarities ended. They were still monsters, and they considered us their enemies – their prey.

They moved without making any noise so they were a real danger you had to watch out for in forests.

“Then what are they? Why are there houses high up in the...”

“This is what I think. That they weren’t initially built in the trees.”

Sooah made an even more confused face at what I said.

“There isn’t anywhere in the forest with an open area big enough to build a house. So they probably cut down a bunch of trees and built some houses on top of the new space. But since plants here grow extremely quickly...doesn’t it make sense that the trees probably started growing under the new houses?”

“Wow....that sounds improbable...but seeing it myself...I can’t say it’s impossible.”

Sooah muttered as she stared at one house that had a tree running straight through the middle of it. That very house was the reason I came to that conclusion.

“The trees below the houses definitely look like they didn’t grow properly. If they have built the houses on top of the trees initially, they would not look like that. Anyway, wouldn’t that mean those houses were built by humans then? So does that mean they were

built by the Chinese hunters?”

“That’s what I think.”

Cho Youngoo murmured as Han Joonseok nodded his head.

# Chapter 100

---

“But I don’t see anyone.”

“Do you really think that hunters would remain in their homes in the light of day? They’re probably all out hunting or...”

“Since the Ezekiel guys were headed in this direction, they’re probably fighting it out somewhere nearby.”

Everyone nodded at my words. Anyway, this was our chance.

There were over a hundred houses that we could see.

Even if I said they were all out hunting, there was still a possibility of some hunters staying behind out of all those houses.

If there was anyone still here, we needed to be prepared to battle it out with them.

“I don’t see our truck.”

While we were all distracted by the houses in the treetops, Park Hanbum spoke up with the very reason we were here in the first place.

The trail looped around this area and continue ahead.

I pondered for a moment.

Should we spend some time here to look through all of the houses for something useful. Or do we chase after our truck first.

It didn't take long for me to decide.

"This is a great opportunity for us to snoop through all the houses here. We could always chase after the truck after we do our search here."

"Hopefully there isn't anyone left behind."

"If there are any, let's make sure we get rid of them. Our target is the largest house you see over there. If they have anyone important or really useful, I'm sure they would have stored it there."

I pointed at the large and beautiful tree that was over 30 meters tall. As large as the house was, the tree beneath it (which was used to built the house) was just as large.

The house looked highly unstable, but seeing that it didn't shake a bit from the large winds that blew against it...it was safer than it seemed.

"Kelby, if you spy anybody other than us..make sure to bark

loudly so we can hear. Got it?”

Yeonkyoung cooed at Kelby as she held him close to her.

Nod nod.

Smart dog. Instead of barking, he had nodded his head to show that he understood. Everytime he did something like this, it stirred a weird feeling in me because it just seemed so human.

So we let Kelby run free through the forest ahead of us. Since he was a dog, even if someone spotted him first, it probably wouldn't alarm them.

After we let him go, we started on our way as well. Rather than moving separately here, it was better for us to move as a group.

This was because if some trouble appeared, we would be better equipped to fight than if we moved independently.

\*\*\*

“No one is here.”

It seemed that climbing up to the houses in the trees was generally done so by using fringed ropes that hung down.



Since I was physically superior in the group, I climbed up the rope to do the checking. There was definitely evidence of people living there.

It was almost as if I could still feel their energy here.

But there wasn't a hide or hair to be seen.

Just from a glance, it was evident that there were probably about 2-300 people living in all the houses. But the fact that there was not even one person here meant that there was something going on.

"There is a high chance that they are somewhere nearby engaging in an all out battle with the Ezekiel guys."

"But it could also be something else entirely. We can't rule anything out."

I added at Han Joonseok's speculation. This was the new land... anything could happen.

"Do you mean an irregular?"

"Yes, I'm sure there will be an irregular lurking around somewhere here too."

"But do you really think several hundred hunters will mobilize because of just one irregular?"

“...hm...I guess not.”

He was right. No matter what kind of irregular it was, it would probably be a level 4-5 maximum. They wouldn't need several hundred hunters to take care of one irregular like that.

“For now, let's move over there.”

I pointed to the large house. It was sitting atop a very large baeksong tree.

Though this type of tree normally doesn't grow taller than 5 meters, for some reason this particular tree was over 30 meters tall.

And because the house was probably built from that same tree, it was a white color – the same shade as the bark of the baeksong tree.

“Sh.”

I detected a small movement just now.

I sent Kelby up Baeksong tree from behind while I had everyone else hide in nearby trees.

I looked to Han Joonseok and asked.

“Do you see anything?”

Han Joonseok had the Optical Ruby Ring which enhances vision by 30% so he squinted his eyes as he looked toward the white building.

There were a lot of branches and leaves in the way, so it was hard for me to see anything.

“It looks like....a person. But I really can’t be sure.”

I nodded my head.

I did think it was strange that there was nobody here, but it seems they had left at least one person behind. Which was good for us.

Now we had someone who could give us some information on what was going on.

“Krrawr!”

Kelby barked loudly from above.

Were we seen? Or was something wrong?

“Yaaaaa!”

Just when I thought I heard something, someone fell from out of a tree about 30 meters high to the ground.

Slam!

Crack!

“Hm...”

Just from the sound of it, it was obvious that was instant death for the unlucky guys. It seemed that the enemy who had discovered Kelby decided to attack. Unfortunate for him.

But I guess anyone would find it strange that a dog was so high up in the trees in the middle of nowhere.

“Hm? That guy is holding a bunch of stuff.”

Cho Youngoo said as he poked at the dead body. His neck was twisted at a weird angle and the blood dripping from his mouth was not a pretty sight, but I picked up the leader bag he had on him.

It looked like briefcase. When I opened it, there were two books inside.

Though the writing was in simplified Chinese, it looked like one of them contained data.

There were over 200 names and data for each person written inside.

Next to each name was also age, address and something else drawn next to it.

It looked like numbers...maybe marks earned in the forest for something?

My best guess was that each mark represented a monster they had hunted in the forest.

I wondered why they would do something so arcane...until I considered how they were in an area with no electricity or power. This made sense.

They didn't have a city like us for us to return to, so they could only rely on more primitive ways to record things like that.

“Lieutenant Aram?”

“Yes?”

“I think you can take this. I'm sure the higher ups would like it.”

This was concrete proof that tied the Chinese hunters to the invasion of the forested area.

“This is...”

“Record kept by the hunters who were stationed here. It contains names, age, and their address...It even has record of all their earnings so I’m sure it will be a big headache for them if this disappears.”

What I was most interested in though was the second book. In simplified Chinese, the cover stated “Equipment List”.

I opened it up.

“This is.....we hit a goldmine....”